

Francesca Bregoli

**Jewish Scholarship, Science, and the Republic of Letters: Joseph Attias in Eighteenth-Century Livorno**

Joseph Attias (1672–1739) was a Livornese savant who was active, in different roles, in both Jewish and non-Jewish circles. Despite his reputation as a great scholar, reinforced by his well-known exchanges with G. B. Vico and L. A. Muratori, Attias did not leave any literary remains and has never been studied in his own right. The catalogue of Attias' extensive library of more than 1200 volumes, one of the largest Jewish-owned collections in the early eighteenth century, which has lately resurfaced in the State Archives of Livorno, allows for a reappraisal of his cultural proclivities. Based on a study of the catalogue, supplemented by published and unpublished sources that include the minutes of the Livornese Jewish council, private correspondence, and travel accounts, Attias' activities as a cultural mediator are reconstructed and his intellectual stance, including his Hebraic learning and role in the Livornese Jewish community alongside his secular studies, is considered. Attias' involvement with the scientific culture of his days, his participation in the Republic of Letters, and his involvement with the Inquisition are investigated.

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## Jewish Scholarship, Science, and the Republic of Letters: Joseph Attias in Eighteenth-Century Livorno<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

At the beginning of April 1706, Alessandro Vallisnieri, a celebrated scientist and professor of *Medicina Pratica* (practical medicine) at the University of Padua, received notice of a forthcoming “beautiful gift” from his correspondent Diacinto Cestoni, based in the Tuscan port city of Livorno. The present was a shipment of Livornese and exotic natural curiosities, such as large oyster shells, an “armored fish” (a particular species of small fish found in the sea of Livorno), a live chameleon, and some swallow nests from Cochin, along with portraits of the scholar Antonio Magliabechi, librarian of the grand duke of Tuscany and of Cestoni himself.<sup>2</sup> The gift, which was meant to enrich the scientific

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Gad Freudenthal for his support and patient work as an editor. I am grateful to three anonymous readers who provided thoughtful comments on an earlier version of the manuscript, as well as to Anne O. Albert, Roger Chartier, Yaacob Dweck, David Ruderman and the members of the Dissertation Reading Group of the History Department at the University of Pennsylvania for their suggestions at different stages in the writing of this article.

<sup>2</sup> G. Cestoni, *Epistolario ad Antonio Vallisnieri*, ed. S. Baglioni, 2 vols. (Rome, 1940–

cabinet Vallisnieri was arranging in Padua, also included a specimen of rare coral: a big piece of “white *ravano*, weighing 18 pounds, similar to a coral trunk, encrusted with small oysters and shells and some marks of red coral.”<sup>3</sup> Appropriately, given that the coral business in Livorno was almost entirely associated with Jewish workers, the donor was a local Jewish savant, Joseph “Filalete” Attias (1672–1739).<sup>4</sup>

Attias is a fascinating figure who was active simultaneously, in different roles, in the Jewish and non-Jewish spheres. As we will see, however, he kept his activities in these two realms distinct and separate.<sup>5</sup> His name is familiar to students of Italian literature who are acquainted with the intellectual universe of the early Enlightenment.<sup>6</sup> The savant enjoyed a personal relationship with the grand dukes of Tuscany, Cosimo III<sup>7</sup> and Gian Gastone de’ Medici,<sup>8</sup> and participated actively in the complex system of government of the Livornese *Nazione Ebraica*. Early accounts of his learning agree on his centrality as an intellectual figure and on the richness of his library.<sup>9</sup> He entertained a rich network of non-Jewish friends and connections in the learned Italian world of the early eighteenth century and participated actively in the international Republic of Letters: during the 1720s, he had epistolary exchanges with some of the most innovative exponents of Italian culture, including the Modenese historian Ludovico Antonio Muratori and the Neapolitan philosopher Giambattista Vico; in 1728 he met and conversed with Montesquieu in Florence.<sup>10</sup>

But Attias left no literary remains, whether in Italian, Spanish, or Hebrew. Although there is evidence that he penned some manuscript notes (on carpentry, of all subjects), and we might speculate about the marginalia that he inserted in his own books, Attias never published anything or left a body of writings for posterity, except for his correspondence.<sup>11</sup> How should we approach a man, unanimously described as a great scholar, but who never wrote anything substantial or felt the urge to publish in a period that was increasingly concerned and consumed with authorship and publication and was aptly dubbed

- 1941), letter 278, p. 514.
- 3 Ibid., letter 261, p. 502.
- 4 On the coral industry in Livorno, see G. Yogev, *Diamonds and Coral. Anglo-Dutch Jews and Eighteenth-Century Trade* (New York, 1978), 102–109.
- 5 The Livornese savant is not to be confused with the eighteenth-century Amsterdam publisher Joseph Attias. Attias adopted the nickname Filalete (Greek for “lover of truth”) to distinguish himself from him and two other Livornese Jews who bore the same name.
- 6 Attias is a rare example of a Jewish scholar known so far mostly through non-Jewish sources. Most recent references to this figure are based on the entry that Elvira Gencarelli devoted to him in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, “Athias Giuseppe,” vol. 1 (Rome, 1960), 525–26. The spelling “Athias” is erroneous: Joseph signed his last name “Attias.” Salvatore Rotta supplemented Gencarelli’s entry on Attias in his “Montesquieu nel settecento italiano: note e ricerche,” in G. Tarello, ed., *Materiali per una storia della cultura giuridica* (Bologna, 1971), 1: 80–82.
- 7 Cosimo III honored Attias with the title of “doctor” at a time when Jews could not enroll at the University of Pisa. Jewish attendance was permitted at the University of Pisa from 1737 on: B. Marangoni, “Minoranze religiose nello Studio di Pisa. Le lauree degli Acatolici, 1737–1799,” *Bollettino Storico Pisano* 64 (1995): 147–92.
- 8 Cosimo’s son and successor Gian Gastone occasionally took Attias to musical and scholarly gatherings in Florence.
- 9 G. Gualberto de Soria, *Raccolta di opere inedite*, 2 vols. (Livorno, 1773–4), 13–15; F. Pera, *Ricordi e biografie livornesi* (Livorno, 1867), 151–57; idem, *Curiosità livornesi inedite e rare* (Livorno, 1888), 226–33.
- 10 Attias is frequently evoked as a solitary figure of great erudition in Italian articles and books about the Jewish community of Livorno at the start of the eighteenth century. See: L. Frattarelli Fischer, “Ebrei a Pisa e Livorno nel Sei e Settecento tra inquisizioni e garanzie granducali,” in *Le Inquisizioni Cristiane e gli Ebrei* (Rome, 2003), 295; U. Wyrwa, *Juden in der Toskana und in Preußen im Vergleich. Aufklärung und Emanzipation in Florenz, Livorno, Berlin und Königsberg i. Pr.* (Tübingen, 2003), 39; B. di Porto, “L’approdo al crogiuolo rinascimentale,” *La Rassegna Mensile d’Israel* 50/9–12 (1984): 803–62, esp. 805.

“the age of the author”?<sup>12</sup> Hence it is not surprising that although Attias is often mentioned in secondary literature, he has never been studied in his own right.

The catalogue of Attias’ extensive library has lately resurfaced in the State Archive of Livorno. This discovery provides us with an excellent opportunity to reconsider the Livornese savant’s cultural proclivities and allows a fresh appraisal of his cultural profile.<sup>13</sup> In this article, I reconstruct Attias’ intellectual stance, focusing both on his Hebraic learning and role in the Livornese Jewish community, and on his secular studies, particularly his involvement with the scientific culture of his days and his participation in the Republic of Letters. I will compare the information from Attias’ library catalogue with other available evidence, drawing on both published and unpublished documents, including the still-untapped minutes of the Livornese Jewish government;<sup>14</sup> Attias’ letters to Antonio Magliabechi,<sup>15</sup> L. A. Muratori,<sup>16</sup> and G. B. Vico;<sup>17</sup> and references to Attias in the work and private correspondence of fellow scholars<sup>18</sup> and in the accounts of contemporary travelers.<sup>19</sup>

### **Attias’ Upbringing in the Sephardi Enclave of Livorno**

A wealthy Sephardi Jew from a merchant family, Joseph Attias was born and raised in Livorno.<sup>20</sup> This port city was the economic center of the Tuscan state during the early modern period.<sup>21</sup> Its *Nazione Ebraica*, as the Jewish community was known, grew around a group of Sephardi Jews and *conversos* who moved there, drawn by the so-called *Livornine* issued by Grand Duke Ferdinand I de’ Medici in 1591–93.<sup>22</sup> These charters, addressed to “merchants of any Nation, Levantine, Ponentine, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, German and Italian, Jewish, Turkish, Moorish, Armenian, Persian, etc.,” guaranteed ample privileges to merchants who settled in Livorno and became eligible for Tuscan citizenship, in order to boost the economy of the city. Portuguese New

- 11 De Soria, *Raccolta di opere*, 13; Pera, *Ricordi e biografie*, 151.
- 12 As Samuel Johnson referred to eighteenth-century Britain.
- 13 Archivio di Stato di Livorno (ASLi), *Auditore e Governatore*, filza 791, inc. 361 (pages not numbered), 1739. I am very grateful to Dr. Lucia Frattarelli Fischer of the University of Pisa, Dr. Paolo Castignoli, former director of the State Archive of Livorno, and Dr. Massimo Sanacore of the State Archive of Livorno, for their help during my research on Attias and their support after I retrieved his library catalogue. Lucia Frattarelli Fischer also signaled the existence of Attias' catalogue, but did not specify its location (see "Ebrei a Pisa e Livorno nel Sei e Settecento," 295). A reproduction of the catalogue is now being prepared by the State Archive of Livorno.
- 14 I would like to thank the heirs of the late Prof. Renzo Toaff of Livorno, who generously put at my disposal the microfilms of the books of the "Deliberaçoims do Governo" (DdG) from 1693 to 1814, which Toaff owned.
- 15 Attias' letters to Magliabechi are in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence (BNF), VIII-SIII-T.22, and reproduced in F. Mascagni, "Corrispondenti livornesi di Antonio Magliabechi," thesis, Faculty of Education, University of Florence, 1976–77, 123–125.
- 16 Attias' letters to Muratori are in the Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, Modena (BEUM), Archivio Muratoriano 52.3, and were published in M. G. di Campli and C. Forlani, eds., *Edizione nazionale del carteggio di L. A. Muratori. Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi* (Florence, 1995), 305–328. On Muratori, see the classic study by S. Bertelli, *Erudizione e storia in Ludovico Antonio Muratori* (Naples, 1960).
- 17 G. Vico, *L'autobiografia, il carteggio e le poesie varie*, ed. B. Croce and F. Nicolini (Bari, 1929), 55–56, 61–62.
- 18 De Soria, *Raccolta di opere*, 13–15; Attias interacted with learned antiquarians and classical humanists, such as the Siense scholar Uberto Benvoglianti and Anton Francesco Marmi, Magliabechi's heir as custodian of the Magliabechiana Library in Florence: G. Provasi, "Giuseppe Attias Senior, 'virtuoso' Livornese del Settecento," *Bollettino Storico Livornese* 4 (1940): 296–97; di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 7, p. 313; letter 10, p. 315; letter 14, p. 318; letter 18, p. 321; letter 21, p. 324; C. Viola, *Edizione nazionale del carteggio di L. A. Muratori. Carteggi con Mansi... Marmi* (Florence, 1999), 427–28, 429, 431, 449–53, 455–56.

Christians and Levantine Jews were especially responsive to the grand duke's invitation.<sup>23</sup> Unlike the rest of Italy, Livornese Jews lived in a ghetto-free town and were allowed to own real estate both in the city and the countryside; they enjoyed protection from the Tuscan Inquisition and complete administrative and judicial autonomy, as well as large tax exemptions.<sup>24</sup> Well into the eighteenth century, the Livornese Jewish community retained a mix of Spanish and Portuguese as its official language, although most of its members also spoke Italian.<sup>25</sup>

Attias' father, a Spanish New Christian, practiced law in Salamanca before turning to commerce and moving to Livorno, where, presumably, he reverted to Judaism.<sup>26</sup> The Livornese Sephardi merchant elite was central to the commercial growth of the city.<sup>27</sup> After a brief stint as a businessman, however, Attias, out of love for learning, "resolved to abandon commerce, withdrawing from society to live on [his] modest revenues."<sup>28</sup> He spent the rest of his adult life devoted to different areas of study, fulfilling a passion for scholarly pursuits that had been frustrated in his youth. Until he was 15, Attias had a teacher of Spanish, with whom he studied reading and writing, and a tutor for Hebrew, "whom we paid a little more than two *paoli* per month. But the poor fellow was not able to teach it to me, since he did not know it himself to begin with."<sup>29</sup> Although Attias, as we will see, was certainly an exceptional character in many respects, his uneven and irregular education does not seem extraordinary for his times. The scholar's comments about his haphazard formal schooling, which he described, no doubt with some exaggeration, as "vague, irregular, and interrupted," and the difficult access to European culture that marked his youth, illuminate the lights and shadows of the education generally received by the children of Sephardi Jewish merchants.<sup>30</sup>

His father had been a lawyer before becoming a merchant, but Attias lamented growing up in a house where the only available books were a "solitary Latin Bible printed in Paris," "a small treatise on some astronomical quadrants by Gemafriusius,"<sup>31</sup> and "eight volumes

- 19 Attias was always eager to meet and converse with travelers to Tuscany, such as Montesquieu and the Saxon painter Georg Martini. See: Montesquieu, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, ed. André Masson (Paris, 1950), 816–17, 1087, 1091; O. Trumpy, “Un inedito incontro con Josef Attias (Livorno - 1725),” *Rassegna di studi livornesi* 1 (1967): 5–12.
- 20 Joseph Attias was born on May 2, 1672, and was buried on March 4, 1739. See Archivio della Comunità Israelitica di Livorno (ACIL), *Repertorio delle nascite*, c11v: A Abram e [Branca?] Attias lhe naseo hum filho que chamarao Josef//Adi 5 d. [de Hiar 5432] [Secundo de] Maio 1672; *ibid.*, *Registro delle tumulazioni*, c 65v, entry 44: Anno 5499 [1739]: H. e Dott.re Josef Filalete Attias Em 24 detto [Adar 1]//4 detto [Marzo] Mercoles.
- 21 J. P. Filippini, *Il porto di Livorno (1676–1814) e la Toscana* (Naples, 1998), 3 vols.; *Convegno Livorno e il Mediterraneo nell'età medicea* (Livorno, 1978). See also L. Frattarelli Fischer, “Reti toscane e reti internazionali degli ebrei di Livorno nel Seicento,” *Zakhor* 6 (2003): 93–116.
- 22 The full text of the charters is reproduced in R. Toaff, *La nazione ebrea a Livorno e Pisa (1591–1700)* (Florence, 1990), 419–31. See also A. Milano, “La Costituzione Livornina del 1593,” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 34 (1968): 394–410; B. Cooperman, “Trade and Settlement: The Establishment and Early Development of the Jewish Communities in Leghorn and Pisa (1591–1626),” doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1976; B. Ravid, “A Tale of Three Cities and Their ‘Raison d’État’: Ancona, Venice, Livorno, and the Competition for Jewish Merchants in the Sixteenth Century,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (1991): 138–62.
- 23 Toaff, *La nazione ebrea*, 141–54.
- 24 On the political and institutional history of the Livornese Jewish community in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see *ibid.*, 155–276. On Jewish merchants in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Filippini, *Il porto di Livorno*, 1: 115–69, 3: 11–357.
- 25 By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the originally Iberian *Nazione Ebraica* of Livorno had metamorphosed into a pluralistic community of approximately 36% Iberian, 32% Italian, and 17% North African Jews: Toaff, *La nazione ebrea*, 415.
- 26 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 23, p. 325.



of Spanish comedies by Lope de Vega, Calderón, Montalbán, Solís, Salazar, and other playwrights of extremely dissolute poetry, who mixed tragedy and comedy, and moreover were not familiar with Greek literature.”<sup>32</sup> Apparently there were no Hebrew books in his father’s house. Attias found a remedy for this cultural desert only after he gained a certain financial independence through marriage, spending “the first money earned from investing the dowry on a diligent Latin teacher and a rabbi who had perfect mastery of the Hebrew Bible and Hebrew grammar.” He read Latin authors daily (“yet in very poor editions, because the country was much more backward then”) and acquired some books in Hebrew. Attias recalled hiding his early book purchases outside his house where they would not be seen by his father, who disapproved of his son’s bibliophilia: “He used to reproach me, since those few books that I would let him see seemed to him already unnecessary and superfluous.”<sup>33</sup> It was perhaps this lack of support and encouragement from his own father, certainly a familiar rhetorical trope, yet not belied by the notoriously meager cultural offerings of late seventeenth-century Livorno, that led Attias to turn to the company of all the learned foreigners “who went through the port,”<sup>34</sup> while assembling one of the largest libraries owned by a Sephardi scholar during the early modern period.

### **“The Most Learned Jew in Tuscany”**

The Tuscan natural philosopher Giovanni Gualberto de Soria (1707–1767) dedicated a short *éloge* to “Attias dottor Gioseffo, Livornese Ebreo” a few decades after his death.<sup>35</sup> “Books and conversations were his main pleasure,” wrote de Soria, “and since he was provided with enough wealth, he was able to devote himself entirely to books and conversations. The most learned men were his friends, while a select and rich library served as a most valuable replacement of their company

for good part of the day. ...”<sup>36</sup> Attias was an expert in “sacred and profane criticism and Oriental languages.” He had a wondrous memory on which he could rely; his main flaw was a tendency to get distracted and digress.<sup>37</sup> One might learn much from Attias, de Soria mused,

- 27 Cooperman, “Trade and Settlement”; M. Cassandro, *Aspetti della storia economica e sociale degli Ebrei di Livorno nel Seicento* (Milan, 1983); J. P. Filippini, “Il posto dei negozianti ebrei nel commercio di Livorno nel Settecento,” *La Rassegna Mensile d’Israel* 50 (1984): 634–49; Frattarelli Fischer, “Reti toscane e reti internazionali,” 98ff.
- 28 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 2, p. 307–308. Attias added that “to this end [he] renovated and enlarged the house where [he] live[d]...” (ibid.).
- 29 Ibid., letter 23, p. 325. The *paolo* was a silver coin, worth 8 *crazie*, or 40 *quattrini*, in eighteenth-century Tuscany. It took its name from Pope Paul III (1534–1550), who first issued this denomination.
- 30 Some notes about schooling and parent-child relationships among the Livornese Sephardim are found in J. R. Lieberman, “Un sermone sull’educazione ebraica alla fine del Seicento,” *La Rassegna Mensile d’Israel* 65 (1999): 73–84.
- 31 Reigner Gemma Frisius (1508–1555), Dutch mathematician and cartographer.
- 32 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 23, p. 325.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 The work was published posthumously: de Soria, *Raccolta*, 13–15. Two Jewish personalities, who both happened to be Sephardim from Livorno, feature in de Soria’s book: “dottor” Joseph Attias and Jacob de Fonseca (ibid., 166–173). On de Soria see F. Venturi, *Settecento Riformatore* (Turin, 1969), 346–354.
- 36 De Soria, *Raccolta*, 13: “Il predominante suo piacere erano i Libri, e il crocchio, e perché era provveduto di sufficienti beni di fortuna, potè abbandonarsi tutto a’ libri e a’ crocchi. I più culti Uomini erano i suoi Amici e una scelta e copiosa libreria gli era degnissimamente in luogo di quelli gran parte del dì.”
- 37 Ibid., 14: “... assuefatto al pensar filologico digrediva per nulla ne’ discorsi.”

but not in any organized form. He had a vast knowledge of European and classical languages—Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, and Portuguese—as well as Oriental languages. While the advanced sciences were not his strength (*le alte Scienze non erano il suo punto forte*), he loved music and played the harp. Attias, de Soria added, “was free of malice, considerate, and courteous. He wanted his library to be always open to his friends; yet in his old age he became more than frugal, since he turned petty or [perhaps] parsimonious.”<sup>38</sup>

De Soria’s brief portrait emphasizes qualities commonly found in other exemplary lives and *éloges* of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scholars, such as civility, liberality, and love of good conversation. Courtesy and scholarly generosity can be traced back to the model of politesse and the ideal of civil conversation and learned sociability exemplified, for instance, by Gassendi’s biography of the French humanist Nicholas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637).<sup>39</sup> The traits of politeness and gentlemanly behavior, it should be noted, recur in other early descriptions of Attias. The Livornese librarian Giuseppe Arnaldo Mornini, who served as an intermediary between the Jewish scholar and the Sienese savant Uberto Benvoglianti (1668–1733), described Attias on June 27, 1723 as “very literate and in general well informed about all sciences. He understands many languages, even Oriental ones. His assiduity as a student in his youth and his [scholarly] activity have turned him perhaps into the most learned Jew in Tuscany (*il più scienziato Ebreo che forse vi sia in Toscana*). Since he lives on a good income, he has always been able to acquire books, and anything else needed for mathematics, music, and other sciences. He has traveled out of pleasure, not business, and has a beautiful way of dealing with people, knowing how to accommodate himself to everybody’s character: an art mastered by few, even at court.”<sup>40</sup>

In her exploration of relationships and practices in the Republic of Letters between 1680 and 1750, Anne Goldgar has argued convincingly that much of the eulogistic literature memorializing deceased scholars

emphasized their acts rather than their works. According to Goldgar, this emphasis on intellectual generosity, collegiality, and mutual support promoted community-building and strengthened a scholarly value system based, not on actual learned output, but on social interaction.<sup>41</sup> Some scholars achieved fame and high repute in the intellectual community despite their poor record of writing or publishing, or even in the absence of brilliant scholarship and research. Antonio Magliabechi (1633–1714), the celebrated librarian of the grand duke of Tuscany and dubbed by Jean Mabillon “a walking museum and living library,” was a case in point.<sup>42</sup> Magliabechi achieved international scholarly renown

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 15: “... era innocente, officioso e cortese. Volea che la sua libreria fosse sempre aperta agli Amici; ma in sua vecchiaia divenne più che parco, perché dette nell’angusto, o nell’avaro.”

<sup>39</sup> See P. N. Miller, *Peiresc’s Europe. Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven and London, 2000), ch. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Provasi, “Giuseppe Attias Senior,” 293: “Detto amico è molto letterato et in generale informato d’ogni scienza. La di lui assiduità nello studio ne’ suoi anni proprij e l’attività sua l’anno fatto divenire il più scienziato Ebreo che forse sia in Toscana: e siccome vive di buona entrata, così de’ libri e ciò ch’altro alla Matematica, Musica et altre scienze occorre, ha sempre saputo provvedersi. Ha fatto de’ viaggi per suo spasso, non mai per negozio: ha bellissimo trattare, e si sa perfettamente accomodare al genio di tutti; arte che pochi la godono anche nelle Corti.” Attias was supposed to visit Benvoglianti in Siena, together with his friend Mornini, some time in both 1723 and 1728. As far as we know, the encounter between the two scholars never took place. Attias was either indisposed or in Florence, in his capacity as a spokesperson on behalf of the Livornese Jewish community. Their relationship continued through the usual means of erudite correspondence (ibid., 294–295).

<sup>41</sup> A. Goldgar, *Impolite Learning. Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750* (New Haven and London, 1995), 115–173, esp. 152ff.

<sup>42</sup> G. Gasperoni, “Antonio Magliabechi nei carteggi dei secoli XVII e XVIII”, in

without publishing a single word and is often mentioned as the prime example of “non-writing scholar.” In fact, the Tuscan librarian fulfilled one of the main duties of citizenship in the Republic of Letters through his good offices: cooperation with and assistance to fellow researchers.<sup>43</sup> This was sufficient for the *Bibliothèque Italique* to dub him “an oracle in the sciences” after his death.<sup>44</sup>

DeSoria’s depiction of Attias fits right into Goldgar’s characterization of memorializing customs in the Republic of Letters. Attias himself appeared aware of his own role and forte within the circle of scholars he traveled in. “Even if I were able to write,” he charmingly admitted to Benvoglianti, “I could not apply myself to such a task because of my chores, occupations, and domestic duties. Also, I like to enjoy myself when I can, as well as to serve and cultivate my friends, who are the dearest thing I have in this world.”<sup>45</sup> In this apology for learned sociability, Attias’ “friendly duties,” the services that he could provide his friends through scholarship and as a bibliographer, were the most important excuse for placing writing on hold. Although not a professional librarian like Magliabechi, Attias was a bibliophile who amassed a large personal library and loved to befriend and converse with like-minded scholars.

Attias’ library functioned as a cultural magnet and was depicted as such in his correspondence. The Livornese scholar often juxtaposed the haven of scholarly commitment that his collection of books represented to him and his friends with the cultural vacuum of the busy port of Livorno.<sup>46</sup> The library was nothing like a study or a rabbinic *bet midrash*. Rather, it was a new sociocultural space, one in which a Jewish scholar not only figuratively opened the gates of his erudition, but also literally opened the doors of his own library to non-Jews. Attias repeatedly called the gatherings that took place in his home *la mia quotidiana conversazione* (“my daily conversation”): it seems that he conducted an early salon.<sup>47</sup> As we will see, his guests were learned English expatriates, German travelers, Swiss booksellers, Sardinian

aristocrats. Some of his friends, who taught at the University of Pisa, brought their students to visit the library, drawing the suspicion of the Tuscan Inquisition. In sum, the collection was a center of scholarly sociability and the focus of one of the most interesting Jewish-Christian social encounters that took place in the early Italian Enlightenment.

So despite his lack of publications or desire to write, Attias acted as an intermediary in the learned group to which he belonged, supplying valuable information as well as books and specimens. At a time of generally heightened concern and attention for authorship, therefore, Attias provided a different scholarly model altogether. Programmatically and self-consciously Attias was an avid reader, not a writer. In the scholarly world, he was a consumer and a mediator. As in the case of Magliabechi, it was Attias' primacy as a book collector and his generosity in opening up his library to fellow scholars that gained him a reputation as "perhaps the most learned Jew living in Tuscany."

*Accademie e Biblioteche d'Italia* 16 (1941-1942), 23-34, esp. 26. Attias had a brief epistolary exchange with Magliabechi; see below.

- 43 M. Rosa, "Un médiateur dans la République des Lettres: le bibliothécaire," in H. Bots and F. Waquet, eds., *Commercium Litterarium. La communication dans la République des Lettres* (Amsterdam and Maarssen, 1994), 81-99.

- 44 Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, 153.

- 45 Provasi, "Giuseppe Attias Senior," 297: "Per me quando sapessi non potrei applicarmi a scrivere per causa delle mie faccende ed occupazioni ed affari domestici. Voglio anco divertirmi mentre posso, e servire e coltivare i miei fedeli amici che son la più cara cosa che mi abbia in questo mondo."

- 46 Attias presented the scholarly profession in opposition to the mercantile one, into which he had been born and out of which he extricated himself to devote his life entirely to learning. His letters often betrayed a mild aristocratic disdain for traders and businessmen, whom he singled out as the epitome of the uncultured person.

- 47 Provasi, "Giuseppe Attias Senior," 295.

## Joseph Attias' Library and its Catalogue

Attias mentioned his "few books," as he modestly calls his collection, several times in his correspondence: by the end of his life, his library contained more than 1200 items. Thanks to the discovery of its catalogue we have a good idea of what this collection looked like; the context in which this catalogue was put together, however, needs to be carefully considered. The 54-page catalogue in quarto, entitled simply "Catalogo della libreria da vendersi in Livorno" (catalogue of the library to be sold in Livorno), lists 1247 volumes in Italian, Latin, Spanish, French, and English, but none in Hebrew. The inventory was prepared after Joseph's death in March 1739 at the behest of his younger brother Jacob, who inherited the collection. The cataloguers were two Christian scholars: the physician Giovanni Gentili<sup>48</sup> and the abbé Bernardo Sterbini.<sup>49</sup> To judge by the title, Jacob commissioned the catalogue so that he could auction off the library.

It is not known how many copies of the list were printed or who printed it. That the catalogue survives (in a single exemplar) is due to the fact that on August 31, 1740, Gentili and Sterbini petitioned the Livorno civil court to order Jacob Attias to pay them for their work, and this copy was submitted as evidence. Joseph Attias' name does not appear in the catalogue; only because of the legal proceedings do we know that this was his library's inventory. The list was probably intended for a specific audience, already partially or fully acquainted with the nature and provenance of the books. The collection was appraised by a number of Florentine booksellers in 1740, who agreed that it was worth the hefty sum of 1400 *pezze*.<sup>50</sup>

The catalogue is divided into eleven categories: theology; moral and political philosophy; jurisprudence; lexicons and grammars; history; literature; natural philosophy and geometry; geography; library catalogues and reviews; omitted books;<sup>51</sup> and English books.<sup>52</sup> Each category is divided into two or three subgroups, according to the format of the volume (folio, quarto, octavo).<sup>53</sup> The largest section in Attias'

- 48 On Gentili, see M. A. Morelli Timpanaro, *A Livorno, nel Settecento. Medici, mercanti, abati, stampatori: Giovanni Gentili (1704–1784) ed il suo ambiente* (Livorno, 1997); Timpanaro does not mention his role in cataloguing Attias' library.
- 49 Sterbini was a knowledgeable antiquarian and coin collector. He seems to have been in London in 1732 and 1733. The abbé was acquainted with Conyers Middleton: three of his letters to the Cambridge theologian survive. On Sterbini and his antiquarian activities, see J. Spier and J. Kagan, "Sir Charles Frederick and the Forgery of Ancient Coins in Eighteenth-century Rome," *Journal of the History of Collection* 12 (2000): 35–90.
- 50 ASLi, *Auditore e Governatore*, filza 791. In the course of the proceedings, Jacob Attias asked several Florentine booksellers to assess the value of Sterbini and Gentili's work (they reckoned that they should be paid 20 or 24 *pezze*, or 15 *talleri*). The booksellers also appraised the library on September 13, 1740. The following booksellers signed the appraisal certificate: Carlo Maria Carilleri, Felice Ottavio Buoniauti, Zanobi Scaleari, Domenico Pagani, Giuseppe Pagani, Bernardo Spiombi, Gio. Filipo Volpi, Francesco Brigazzi, Marco Margini, Cosimo Silvestri. An official copy of this certificate, dated October 24, 1740, and also attached to the file, includes the name of Jacobo Giovagnuoli as well. The *pezza da 8 reali* was a common type of currency in eighteenth-century Tuscany. Each *pezza* was worth 5.15 *lire toscane* (each *lira toscana* was worth 20 *soldi* or 12 *crazie*). I have not been able to find any evidence concerning the fate of the books and whether the library was in fact sold.
- 51 That is, books that must have escaped the first classification for unspecified reasons.
- 52 Early modern bibliographic practice reflected contemporary intellectual hierarchies. Sale catalogues, however, were organized according to more pragmatic criteria than scholarly bibliographies meant to provide a comprehensive view of available knowledge. One of the most common early eighteenth-century systems employed by French booksellers, and made popular by Prosper Marchand, divided books into five classes: theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, humanities, and history. It does not seem that Sterbini and Gentili followed a well-known, recognizable bibliographic method. On the issue of library classification and the organization of knowledge, see L. Balsamo, *La bibliografia. Storia di una tradizione* (Florence, 1984); H. Zedelmaier, *Bibliotheca universalis und bibliotheca selecta: das Problem der Ordnung des gelehrten Wissens in der frühen Neuzeit* (Cologne, 1992).



library consisted of 270 volumes on the natural sciences, physics, and medicine, which included many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century editions. After this came belles lettres with 173 titles. Attias' study aids, lexicons, and various grammars and language books are represented by 158 titles; there are 154 historical texts. The legal collection included 115 volumes, while there were 104 theological and sacred titles. The other categories consisted of fewer than 100 books each: 79 titles in geography and travel literature, 64 in moral and political philosophy, and the same number of journals, reviews, and bibliographies.<sup>54</sup> The 27 "omitted books" included various categories, as did the 40 English books, among which appear eight by the deist John Toland.<sup>55</sup>

The records of the court case shed light on the complicated issue of library classification and bibliography. Gentili and Sterbini claimed that Joseph Attias had left his collection "in very poor order and completely devoid of a catalogue or inventory."<sup>56</sup> On September 16, 1740, the witness Giuseppe Calzabigi, who helped "write down and put on paper said catalogue,"<sup>57</sup> affirmed that Gentili and Sterbini had *reorganized* Joseph Attias' library. Their job consisted of "forming and separating into classes the subjects of the books composing said library, and forming the catalogue which sig. Jacob Attias subsequently gave to the press."<sup>58</sup> On September 30, another witness, Giobatta Ferrari, stated that Sterbini and Gentili "added on the outside of several of said books the names of the author and the subject matter, when they were missing."<sup>59</sup> From this we may infer that some books in Attias' library lacked a frontispiece, which might explain why the information on their authors and contents was defective. This may also clarify why many entries in the printed catalogue are incomplete or slightly inaccurate and do not reflect the correct spelling or title as it appears on the frontispiece of extant copies of these works. Another plausible explanation for the imprecision of many catalogue entries, however, may be the hasty preparation of the inventory. Perhaps the compilers' lack of solid bibliographic skills should also be taken into account.

When Jacob Attias appeared in court,<sup>60</sup> he complained about the quality of Gentili and Sterbini's product: "... the catalogue did not

- 53 The first library catalogue to utilize such subdivision was the *Bibliothecae Cordusianae catalogus*, by Gabriel Naudé (Paris, 1643). See Balsamo, *La bibliografia*, 71.
- 54 For the complete classification list, see Appendix 2. In the following notes, I maintained the original spelling variations.
- 55 Item 1 A Collection of Several Preces of M. Joh. Toland. Vol. II. London 1726; item 3 Christianity not Mysterious By John Toland. London 1702; item 4 Tetradyms containing 1. Hodegus 2. Clidophorus 3. Hyppatra 4. Mongoneutes By M. Toland; item 6 Letters to Serena By M. Toland. London 1704; item 8 An Account of etc. Prussia and Hannover By M. Toland. London 1714; item 13 Anglia hbera [sic] By fo [sic] Toland. London 1701; item 14 Nazarenus or Jewish Gentile and Mahometan Christianity By M. Toland London; item 15 A Philippick Oration Jo. [sic] incite English against the French By John Toland. London 1707.
- 56 ASLi, *Auditore e Governatore*, filza 791: "In malissimo ordine e priva affatto di Catalogo, o sia inventario." Gentili and Sterbini worked on the job in July and August 1739. The trial spanned six months and ended with a settlement between the parties. The last documents I was able to find are dated February 6 and 7, 1740 (i.e., 1741).
- 57 Ibid.: "... essendovi io intervenuto per ridurre in iscritto e mettere in carta il detto Catalogo da essi come sopra formato."
- 58 Ibid.: "... con formare e separare le Classi delle Materie dei Libri componenti la detta libreria, e formare il catalogo fatto poi dare alla pubblica stampa dal sig. Giacob Attias." Calzabigi affirmed that he started after the two scholars and assisted them for about a month and a half. Attias paid him 20 *pezze* for his work.
- 59 Ibid.: "... apposti a più e diversi di detti libri i nomi dell'Autore e materie al di fuori dove mancavano." Ferrari was informed of their activity because he was in charge of opening the library to the two scholars and closing it when they left, with the assistance of a sig. Arias. It seems safe to assume that the library was in a separate floor or section of Joseph Attias' house (or possibly a separate building altogether), as keys were needed to access it.

turn out to be as perfect as was required, as judged by many professors familiar with similar catalogues.”<sup>61</sup> The flaws in the catalogue, added the younger Attias, were evident to Gentili and Sterbini themselves. Indeed, the two scholars were so ashamed of the faulty work that they blamed it on Calzabigi’s illiteracy and pretended they were not even involved with its preparation!<sup>62</sup> As for Gentili and Sterbini’s assertion that they had reordered his brother’s chaotic library, this too was preposterous: “They claim that they worked to put the library in good order and separate the books’ subjects by classes and prepare the catalogue ... , but it is altogether impossible to believe that the late sig. dott. Filalete Attias ... would keep it [i.e., the library] messy and disorganized, as it is well known to anybody who met him how great his precision was. ... Rather, said sig. Sterbini and Gentili muddled and confused the fine order in which sig. dott. Filalete Attias left the library, as can be clearly recognized from the catalogue.”<sup>63</sup>

Whether the two Christian scholars had in fact “disorganized” Joseph Attias’ library rather than “reorganized” it cannot be said today. Whatever the case, our knowledge of the Jewish scholar Joseph Attias’ library is based on a catalogue prepared by two Christian men of letters after his death. The internal classifications, we may speculate, probably reflect cultural categories and biases that were not Attias’, but the cataloguers’. With this in mind we can proceed to study Joseph Attias’ “few books” as we know them from this list.<sup>64</sup>

### **Attias’ Hebraic Interests**

Of the 1247 texts listed in the catalogue, only fifteen were by Jewish authors—works of history and philosophy, plus two popular multilingual dictionaries: Attias had five editions of Josephus’ historical works, in Italian, French, and Latin;<sup>65</sup> Buxtorf’s Latin version of Maimonides’ *Guide for the Perplexed*;<sup>66</sup> French and Latin translations

- 60 As we might expect, the defendant's version of the events was quite different. Jacob Attias maintained that Gentili and Sterbini never mentioned an honorarium for their work, but had carried out the task "with the only desire to assist a common friend, and the only goal to see and read more comfortably not only the rare books to be found in the library of the defendant, but also those numerous notes by the hand of the late sig. dott. Filalete Attias, brother of the defendant, which were in said library." ASLi, *ibid.*: "... col solo genio di favorire un amico comune e col solo fine di avere maggiore comodità di leggere e vedere oltre il libri [*sic*] rari che nella libreria del Sig.re Comp.e si ritrovavano, anche quelle note che in gran numero di carattere del fu Sig.re Dott.re Filalete Attias fratello del Sig.re Comp.e erano nella suddetta libreria."
- 61 ASLi, *ibid.*: "... il Catalogo non è riuscito di quella perfezione che richiedevasi, come è stato giudicato da più e più Professore, pratici di simili Cataloghi."
- 62 *Ibid.*: "... per evitare la faccia che incorso avevano con aver dato alla luce un Indice e Catalogo che non era di quella perfezione che richiedevasi, asserivano essere quello stato del suddetto Sig.re Calzabigi, e che loro niente intorno al medesimo operato avevano."
- 63 *Ibid.*: "Inoltre, non credano Sterbini e Gentili di aumentare le loro pretensioni con l'attestato da loro prodotto in atti del Sig.re Calzabigi ... col quale pretendono di perorare di avere essi impiegato la loro opera per porre in buona ordinanza la libreria e separare le Classi delle materie de libri e formare il Catalogo, perché riservandosi detto Sig.re Comp.te di dire e dedurre contro del medesimo attestato ciò che li possa occorrere, e di dare l'Interrogatori e omettendo il dire, che del tutto impossibile è il potersi credere che il fu Sig.re D.re Filalete Attias per la morte del quale è pervenuta nel Sig.re Comp.te la detta libreria, tenesse quella scomposta, e malordinata, quando quanto grande fosse la puntualità del medesimo è ben noto a chiunque l'abbia conosciuto, e tralasciato da parte il francamente asserire che piuttosto detti Signori Sterbini e Gentili hanno scomposto, e disordinato il bell'ordine nel quale era stata lasciata dal Sig.re Dott.re Filalete Attias la mentovata libreria, come si può chiaramente riconoscere dal detto Catalogo."
- 64 We cannot know for certain whether the inventory lists Attias' entire library. It is my contention, however, that it provides a good reflection of Attias' intellectual interests as we know them from other extant sources.
- 65 Item 444 Flavii Josephi Opera quae extant Jo. Hudsonus diligenter emendavit, et nova

of Philo;<sup>67</sup> Abravanel's commentary on Hosea, in Latin;<sup>68</sup> Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'Amore*;<sup>69</sup> Simone Luzzatto's *Socrate*;<sup>70</sup> Isaac Cardoso's *Philosophia libera*;<sup>71</sup> Abraham bar Hiyya Savasorda's *Sphaera mundi*, also in Latin;<sup>72</sup> and the lexicons by David de Pomis and Elia Levita.<sup>73</sup> The catalogue does not list any works exclusively in Hebrew, although we find bilingual and multilingual editions. The absence of such staple texts as a *siddur*, a *mahzor*, a *haggadah*, books that most likely Attias owned, testifies to the incomplete nature of the catalogue. It is likely that Jacob Attias decided not to auction the Hebrew portion of his brother's library, but we may never know whether he in fact kept the Hebrew books for himself. An additional explanation is that Joseph Attias' Hebrew books did not make it to the printed inventory because he kept them separate from his mostly "gentile" library. Another possibility is that no Hebrew books appear in the catalogue because Gentili and Sterbini did not know the language. Finally, the Hebrew material may have been excluded on economic grounds. This was suggested by Yosef Kaplan in his examination of the catalogue of the library of the Amsterdam rabbi David Nunes Torres, auctioned off after his death in 1728.<sup>74</sup> Although Nunes Torres certainly owned Hebrew texts, given his profession, the 1520 titles in the inventory do not include any in Hebrew.<sup>75</sup> It is thus possible that the Hebrew texts owned by both Nunes Torres and Attias were excluded from their library catalogues for purely commercial reasons; non-Hebrew editions would be more appealing to potential non-Jewish buyers. Whatever the reason for the omission, we have no way to gauge the number of Hebrew books owned by Attias.<sup>76</sup>

Most of Attias' books on Hebrew and Jewish history and customs were written by Christian Hebraists. His interaction with Christian scholars might trigger the savant's curiosity about a specific edition. For instance, Attias became interested in acquiring a copy of a bilingual Mishnah with Latin commentary after seeing the volume in Florence at Antonio Magliabechi's.<sup>77</sup> This was the first complete Latin translation

- versione donavit. Oxoniae e Th. Sheldoniano 1720. Tomi 2; item 445 Flavii Josephi Antiq. Judaicarum Interprete Rufino. Ejusdem reliqua Opera diversis Interpretibus ab Erasmo recognita. Coloniae 1534; item 547 Flavius Joseph Hist. de la Guerre des Juifs contre les Romains. Trad. du Grec en Francois par M. Andilly. Ams. 1703. Tomi 2; item 548 Les Antiquitez Judaïques de meme trad. par Andilly. Ams. 1715. Tomi 3; item 591 Gioseffo della guerra Giudaica. Ven. 1570.
- 66 Item 35 Rabbi Moisis Maimonidis. Doctor Perplexorum a Jo. Buxtorfio in Lat. versus. Basileae 1629.
- 67 Item 12 Philonis Judaei Opera, quae extant ex accuratissima Sigismundi Gelenii, et aliorum interpretatione. Francofurti 1691; item 86 Philon Juif traduit en Francois a Paris 1619.
- 68 Item 43 Rabbi Isaaci Abrabanelis Commentarius in Hoseam. Lug. Bat. 1688.
- 69 Item 167 Leone Ebreo Dialoghi d'Amore. Ven. 1558.
- 70 Item 118 Simon Luzzatto Socrate. Venezia 1651.
- 71 Item 773 Isac Cardoso Philosophia libera. Ven. 1673.
- 72 Item 841 Rabbi Abram Ispani Sphaera Mundi in Lat. versa per Oswaldum Scherekhensuscum.
- 73 Item 293 David de Pomis Dict. Italico-Latino Haebraicum. Venet. 1587; item 412 Eliae Levitae Nomenclator Graeco Latino Germanicus. Frenekeræ 1652. It is interesting to note that Attias' catalogue does not list a copy of Leone Modena's *Riti Ebraici*, one of the most well-known seventeenth-century texts on Jewish customs, and the first written by a Jewish author.
- 74 Y. Kaplan, "El perfil cultural de tres rabinos sefardíes a través del análisis de sus bibliotecas," in J. Contreras, B. J. García García, and I. Pulido, eds., *Familia, religión y negocio. El sefardismo en las relaciones entre el mundo ibérico y los Países Bajos en la Edad Moderna* (Madrid, 2002), 269–286. Kaplan studied three catalogues of libraries owned by Sephardi scholars in this period.
- 75 Ibid., 281.
- 76 By 1744, the library of the Talmud Torah (i.e., the school) of the Jewish community of Livorno consisted of 263 Hebrew volumes. See C. Bernheimer, "The Library of the Talmud Torah at Leghorn," in *Studies in Jewish Bibliography in honor of Abraham S. Freidus* (New York, 1929), 1–4.

of the Mishnah, prepared by the Dutch Christian Hebraist Willem Surenhuis (Surenhusius) and printed in Amsterdam.<sup>78</sup> Magliabechi lent his own copy to Attias for a few months in 1702.<sup>79</sup> Four years later, it was Magliabechi who turned to Attias, in the hope of getting hold of the most recent volumes of Surenhuis' translation. On that occasion, Attias lamented his inability to get a complete set of the work for himself because of a series of unfortunate circumstances and the vagaries of transportation.<sup>80</sup> The Livornese scholar, however, must have been able to secure the entire set for himself after all, as his library catalogue lists Surenhuis' edition of the Mishnah.<sup>81</sup>

As we may expect, Attias also owned several texts by Johannes Buxtorf senior, the most influential seventeenth-century Christian Hebraist.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, the catalogue includes works on a variety of themes (from commentaries on the Hebrew Bible to grammars and linguistic aids; from studies of rabbinic literature, to works on Jewish customs and rituals, to anti-Jewish tracts) by Giulio Bartolucci,<sup>83</sup> Cardinal Bellarmine,<sup>84</sup> Luigi Maria Benetelli,<sup>85</sup> Samuel Bochart,<sup>86</sup> Johannes Buxtorf junior,<sup>87</sup> John Henry Hottinger,<sup>88</sup> Carlo Imbonati,<sup>89</sup> John Lightfoot,<sup>90</sup> Melchiorre Palambrotti,<sup>91</sup> Jean Plantavit de la Pause,<sup>92</sup> Johannes Reuchlin,<sup>93</sup> John Spencer,<sup>94</sup> John Selden,<sup>95</sup> and Johann Christian Wagenseil;<sup>96</sup> historical works by Jacques Basnage<sup>97</sup> and Richard Simon;<sup>98</sup> and the kabbalistic anthology by Christian Knorr von Rosenroth.<sup>99</sup> The catalogue's emphasis on texts by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Christian Hebraists fits well with Attias' Hebrew schooling, which relied equally on medieval Jewish grammatical works and on modern Christian Hebraist tools: "I learned some Hebrew in my Nation's schools," Attias told Muratori, "which I subsequently cultivated together with the other Oriental Languages by means of the grammatical methods of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Jews and of the Christian Hebraists."<sup>100</sup> Nine years later, Attias added that "in Arabic, Syriac, and Samaritan [he could] understand those passages that help [him] with Hebrew literature and to get access into the thoughts

- 77 Attias sent three letters to Magliabechi on the subject. We do not have Magliabechi's replies. After seeing the Mishnah in Magliabechi's library, Attias, unable to remember its author and edition, turned to the prodigious memory of the Florentine librarian on October 16, 1701 (Mascagni, *Corrispondenti livornesi*, 123). Attias expressed a desire to acquire a copy of the Mishnah for himself, adding that he would be grateful to Magliabechi if he could find a way to procure him a copy for purchase. In exchange for such a favor, as was customary, Attias offered his good offices and assistance should Magliabechi need anything in Livorno.
- 78 Willem Surenhuis (ca. 1664–1729) was professor of Oriental languages and Greek at the Athenaeum Illustre in Amsterdam. The work was published in Amsterdam by the press of Gerardus and Jacobus Borstius, as a six-volume set, between 1698 and 1703. See P. van Rooden, "The Amsterdam Translation of the Mishnah," in W. Horbury, ed., *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda* (Edinburgh, 1999), 257–67.
- 79 Mascagni, *Corrispondenti livornesi*, 124. Attias contacted Magliabechi on April 17, 1702 to make sure that the volume had been returned safely to its owner. Magliabechi asked Attias to deliver two books—one to an unknown recipient in Marseille, the other to "il Signor Cupero" through a Giacomo Calkberner (most likely a Dutch merchant who had business in Livorno). We can identify the latter recipient as Gisbert Cuper (1644–1716), professor of classics and headmaster of the Athenaeum in Deventer in the Low Countries.
- 80 Ibid., 125. Attias replied to Magliabechi's inquiry on October 4, 1706. After ordering a copy of the entire set to be shipped from Amsterdam, Attias had to wait for the completion of its publication (it appears that the Livornese scholar was misinformed when he stated that the last volume of the Mishnah had been printed in 1705. In fact, the sixth volume of Surenhuis' translation came out in 1703). After the books were shipped the parcel had been captured by the French. Attias hoped to recover it through the good offices of the French consul in Livorno, but the Padre Vicario of Livorno, the most authoritative local religious figure, had stopped the effort, fearing that the books might be prohibited. If Magliabechi wanted to acquire the same set for the grand duke's library, Attias concluded, he would most likely be able to do it through the French consul, if the books were still held there and had not been sent elsewhere.



of Bochart and other eminent non-Jewish men of letters, who are Hebraists.”<sup>101</sup>

### Antiquarianism, Philology, and Jewish Antiquities

Attias apparently related to Hebrew with a “scientific” spirit, considering this language on a par with other “Oriental” languages such as Arabic, Syriac, and Samaritan—or, for that matter, the elusive Etruscan language. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Tuscan scholars tempered the recognition of the fact that the peninsula had culturally fallen behind most European countries with an unmitigated pride for Italian, and particularly Tuscan, intellectual traditions.<sup>102</sup> The investigation of archaeological finds and antiquarian subjects seemed especially useful for re-establishing and recovering Italy’s former prestige in the Republic of Letters, after a century of cultural decline.<sup>103</sup> As the scholar Pietro Giulianelli, echoed by Scipione Maffei and others, observed, “because of our lack of adequate means, the *oltramontani* (Transalpine scholars) have gone well beyond us in the sciences. But in *antiquaria* ... no one has yet arrived at the excellence of Italians.”<sup>104</sup> The rediscovery in the 1720s of the previously unknown Etruscan civilization made it possible for Tuscan scholars to use the contents of antiquarian collections for historical and academic purposes, giving a fresh spur to the study of local history and a novel appreciation of documentary and archaeological evidence. While teaching at Bologna and Pisa early in the seventeenth century, the scholar Thomas Dempster (1570–1635) had collected a number of strange artifacts and illegible inscriptions. Drawing on various Latin sources, he had deduced the existence of a highly developed civilization in Italy that preceded the rise of Rome. Dempster’s manuscript, *De Etruria regali* (1619), was acquired in Florence in 1720 by a traveling Englishman, Thomas Coke, who handed it over to his friend, the antiquarian Filippo Buonarroti

- 81 Item 7 Guiljelm Surenhusii Systema totius Juris Hebraeorum, Rituum, Antiquitatum, Legum Oralium etc. cum Cl. Rabbinorum Maimonidis, et Bartenorae Comm. integris. Quibus acced. variorum Auctorum notae in eos, quos ediderunt, Codices etc. Ams. excud. Gerhardus et Jac. Borstius 1698. Tomi 6. Attias owned another text by Surenhuis: item 37 Guiljelmi Surenhusii Biblos Katallagès. Ams. 1713.
- 82 Item 11 Jo. Buxtorfii Concordantiae Bibliorum Hebraice. Basileae Typ. Lud. Koing. 1632; item 38 Jo. Buxtorfii Commentarius Masorethius triplex, Historicus, Didacticus, Criticus. Basileae 1665; 284 Jo. Buxtorfi Lexicon Chaldaicum, Thalmudicum, et Rabbinicum. Basileae 1639; item 375 Jo. Buxtorfii Lexicon Hebraicum et Chaldaicum. Basileae 1676; item 380 Jo. Buxtorfi Manuale Hebraicum et Chaldaicum. Basil. 1658; item 381 Jo. Buxtorfi Florilegium Hebraicum. Basil. 1658; item 397 Jo. Buxtorfii Thesaurus Grammaticus linguae sanctae Hebraeae. Basil. 1663; item 405 Jo. Buxtorfii de abbreviationibus Hebraicis. Basil. 1640; item 406 Jo. Buxtorfii Institutio Epistolaris Hebraica. Basil. 1629; item 407 Jo. Buxtorfii Grammat. Chaldaica, and Syriaca. Basil. 1601. On Johannes Buxtorf, see S. G. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden and New York, 1996).
- 83 Item 6 Julii Bartolocci Biblioth. Magna Rabbinica, de Scrip. et Scriptis Hebraicis, Latine, et Hebraice. Romae Typ. G. C. P. F. 1675. Tomi 4.
- 84 Item 401 Roberti Bellarmini Instit. Linguae Hebraicae. 1619.
- 85 Item 60 Bentelli [sic] Saette di Gionata. Venezia 1703.
- 86 Item 8 Samuelis Bocharti Opera Omnia. Lug. Bat. Et Trajecti ad Rhenum 1712. Tomi 4.
- 87 Item 39 Jo Buxtorfii filii Exercitationes ad Historiam S. Basileae 1659; item 335 Jo. Buxtorfii Junioris Lexicon Chaldaico Syriac. Basileae ex. off. Lud. Regis; item 348 Jo. Buxtorfii Filii De punctorum vocalium et accentuum in lib. Vet. T. Hebraicis etc. Basilae. 1648.
- 88 Item 32 Jo. Her. Hottingerii Thesaurus Philologicus, seu Clavis Scripturae. Tiguri Typ. Jac. Badnucj [sic: Bodmeri] 1659; item 333 Jo. Hen. Hottingeri Smegma Orientale sordibus barbarismi praesertim contemptui Linguarum Orientalium oppositum. Heidelberg 1658; item 334 Jo. Hen. Hottingeri Promptuario sive Bibliotheca Orientalis. Heidelberg 1658; item 1V92 (sic: 1192) Jo. Hen. Hottingeri Grammatica Hebraica, Chaldaica, Syriaca, Arabica. Heidelbergae 1659.

(1661–1733).<sup>105</sup> Buonarroti supplemented the original text with many illustrations of monuments like those mentioned by Dempster, added a long appendix interpreting a recently published set of ancient Umbrian tablets (known as the *Tavole Eugubine*), and published his edition of Dempster's *De Etruria regali* in 1726. In his *Istoria Diplomatica*, Scipione Maffei greeted the publication with enthusiasm, saluting it as “a new source of marvelous and precious knowledge ... the documents of another people until now unjustly omitted from the study of antiquities.”<sup>106</sup>

Attias contributed to the discussion from the vantage point of his Hebraic expertise. In 1726, the Sienese scholar Uberto Benvoglianti published in the *Giornale de' letterati d'Italia* a learned study of the origins of the ancient Italic peoples, the *Discorso sull'origine della lettera K*, and sent it to Attias in Livorno, so that “he would read it in his daily literary gathering.”<sup>107</sup> In 1728, after hearing that Attias had composed some notes to Maffei's *Istoria Diplomatica* concerning the origins of the Etruscans, Benvoglianti turned to his liaison in the Tuscan port, the Livornese librarian Giuseppe Arnaldo Mornini, requesting a copy of that manuscript. From Attias' reply, however, it becomes clear that no such handwritten notes existed: “I did not make any notes to the [*Istoria*] *Diplomatica* by sig. marchese Maffei. I suppose these rumors were born out of a conversation I held with sig. *auditore* Buonarroti on the origins of the ancient Italic peoples. We were saying that sig. marchese trusted Christian Adricomius and some Hebraists from his country, who did not make a distinction between the famous city of ענר (‘Aner), capital of a Palestinian province, and the city of ענרער (‘Anro‘er), which was situated partly on the shore and partly on a small island of the Arnon river, like Paris, close to another city called ענטרת (‘Antarot).<sup>108</sup> Said author [i.e., Maffei] maintains that the ancient Etruscans originate from them.”<sup>109</sup> Attias' critical discussion of the Dutch Christiaan van Adrichem (1533–1585), a cleric and topographer who published treatises on the city of Jerusalem and the Holy Land,

- 89 Item 299 Caroli Jos. Imbonati Bibliotheca Latino-Haebraica. Romae 1694.
- 90 Item 17 Jo. Lightofoti Opera Omnia cum Opp. ejusdem posthumis. Ultrajecti ap. Guilielmum Brodelet 1699. Tomi 7.
- 91 Item 100 Melchior Palambrotti raccolta d'argumenti contro gli Ebrei. Ven. 1649.
- 92 Item 9 Jo. Plantavitii Florilegium Biblicum. Lodovae Typ. Arnaldi Colomuci [sic: Colomeri] 1645; item 10 Jo. Plantavitii Florilegium Rabbinicum. Lodovae 1645; item 310 Jo. Plantevit Thesaurus Synonymicus Hebraico-Chaldaico, Latinicus. Lodovae Typ. Arn. Colomerii 1644. Tomi 4.
- 93 Item 349 Jo. Reuchlin de Accentib. et Orthographiae Hebraicae linguae. Haganoae 1518.
- 94 Item 19 Jo. Spenceri, de Legibus Hebraeorum ritualibus, et earum rationibus. Cantabrigiae 1695.
- 95 Item 41. Jo. Seldeni Uxor Hebraica, seu de Nuptiis et divortiis Hebraeorum. Francofurti 1695.
- 96 Item 47 Jo. Christoph. Wangeseilii vari argumenti exercitationes sex. Altdorfii 1687.
- 97 Item 544 Basnage Histoire, et Religion des Juifs. Rotterdam 1707. Tomi 5.
- 98 Item 53. Richard Simon Historiae Critique du Vieux Testament. Rotterdam 1685. Tomi 2.
- 99 Item 339 Christiani Ronserth [sic] Lexicon Cabalisticum, sive Cabala enundata [sic], de Doctrina Hebraeorum Transcendentali, Metaphysica et Theologica. Sulzbaci 1677. Tometti 20.
- 100 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 2, p. 307.
- 101 Ibid., letter 23, p. 325
- 102 Attias' letters to Muratori illuminate his awareness of the current literary and political discussion about the deplorable state of Italian culture. During his long stay in Florence in 1728 and 1729, Attias had the occasion to attend the humanist Antonio Maria Salvini (1653–1729) during his terminal illness. Remembering his friend, Attias lamented that only after Salvini's passing had the people of Florence started praising him; yet little did they remember Galileo and Redi (di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 17, p. 321). A similarly sour tone can be detected in an earlier letter, when Salvini was still alive, on the occasion of an acknowledgment obtained by Muratori in 1726: "Not only I, but all the friends of my [literary] gathering rejoiced in hearing that

must have been fairly extensive if it could be mistaken for a full-fledged commentary on the origins of the Etruscans. Attias' resort to biblical scholarship in the service of the flourishing study of Etruscan antiquities that swept Italy in the late 1720s is remarkable.<sup>110</sup> Our Livornese scholar seems to have valued the Hebrew language, and hence ancient Judaic culture, as part of a scholarly system that considered them on a par with other ancient civilizations, such as the Etruscan.

Attias never dwelled on the special and sacred nature of the Hebrew language in his correspondence. Nor did he ever make unsolicited remarks about Hebrew literature in his letters. This is all the more unexpected, as he did volunteer his opinion quite freely and generously when it came to the sciences or to classical, Italian, and English literature. The only occasions on which Attias referred to Hebrew texts or Jewish subjects in his letters were direct replies to the writer's curiosity or otherwise related to his correspondent's work. Attias' comments demonstrate an unfailing critical spirit, a rational disposition, and philological expertise. On January 11, 1725, Attias received a visit from two barons from Sardinia. "After a long and obscure discourse," he wrote his Modenese friend Muratori the next day, "they asked me for the *Key of Solomon* (*Clavicula Salomonis*). I resolved to disillusion them ... and eventually persuaded them to bring back to Sardinia some copies of your golden book *Reflections on Good Taste*, which will cure them of this and other vulgar errors."<sup>111</sup> The *Key of Solomon* was one of the most famous Renaissance grimoires, a handbook of magical recipes, most likely composed some time in the sixteenth century but attributed to the biblical King Solomon.<sup>112</sup>

It is significant that Attias thought of suggesting Muratori's *Riflessioni sopra il buon gusto* as an enlightened therapy against the faux kabbalistic *Clavicula Salomonis*. In this work on literature and historiography, published in 1708 under the pseudonym "Lamindo Pritanio," Muratori envisioned a philological and critical methodology meant to rejuvenate Italian culture, essentially inspired by Galilean

His Catholic Majesty [i.e., the King of France] recognized you with a gift of a golden chain,” Attias wrote. “And apropos of this, it is appropriate what sig. abbé Salvini usually says, that in order to be known in their homeland, Italian men of letters need to be acknowledged by our transalpine neighbors [han bisogno delle patenti degli oltramontani]” (di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta...* Azzi, letter 8, p. 314). Salvini was a towering figure of early eighteenth-century Tuscan culture. Powerful and influential, Salvini, a member of the *Accademia della Crusca*, was a pioneer of Homeric studies and a theoretician of the art of translation. See V. Placella, “Il padre dei traduttori omerici settecenteschi, Anton Maria Salvini,” *Filologia e Letteratura* 15 (1969): 379–409. Attias owned Salvini’s translation of Homer: item 727 Omero l’Iliade trad. in Verso sciolto Toscano da Antonio M. Salvini. Fir. 1723. Tomi 2.; item 728 Omero l’Odissea trad. in Verso sciolto Toscano da Antonio M. Salvini. Fir. 1723. Tomi 2.

103 E. W. Cochrane, “Antiquities, Archeology, and History,” in E. W. Cochrane, *Tradition and Enlightenment in the Tuscan Academies, 1690–1800* (Rome, 1961), 157–206.

104 Ibid., 161.

105 Senator Filippo Buonarroti acted as “Auditore delle Riformazioni e della Giurisdizione” in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany between 1699 and 1733. He is not to be confused with the Italian egalitarian and utopian socialist of the same name (1761–1837). See M. Verga, “La cultura del Settecento. Dai Medici ai Lorena,” in F. Diaz, ed., *Storia della Civiltà Toscana. Vol. IV: L’età dei Lumi* (Florence, 1999), 10–13.

106 Cochrane, “Antiquities, Archeology, and History,” 166.

107 Provasi, “Giuseppe Attias Senior,” 294: “il suo quotidiano letterario congresso.”

108 *Aner* is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 6:55 as a city of Manasseh, given to the Levites of the Kohathite family: “And out of the half tribe of Manasseh: Aner with its pasturelands, and Bileam with pasturelands, for the rest of the families of the Kohathites.” I am very grateful to Prof. Rehav (Buni) Rubin of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for discussing Adrichem and this passage with me. After checking Adrichem’s map, he observed that the two Hebrew names in Attias’ letter are misspelled. The city of “Anr’oer” should be read as “Ar’oer,” one of the towns of the tribe of Reuben, near the Arnon river, next to which is “the city that is in the middle of the valley” (Josh. 13:16). Antarat should be read as “Aṭarat,” one of the cities on the Arnon, next to “Dibon, Jazer and Nimrah” (Numbers 32:3).<sub>2</sub>

methods of experimental science.<sup>113</sup> That Attias shared a similar, critically precise, and philologically accurate outlook is evident from a further comment on the *Key of Solomon* in a later letter: “I would like to know which kind of person might have been the impostor who invented your *Key of Solomon*, etc., and in which epoch it might have been composed,” Attias wrote. “If it is so absurd,” he continued “it is not worth keeping it or discussing it. Any erudite person could compose one as a joke and make it more similar to Solomon’s work, by imitating biblical idioms and dealing with really obscure and opaque matters, like the kabbalistic book *Zohar*.”<sup>114</sup> Attias’ comment on the “really obscure and opaque matters” of the *Zohar* shows that he knew this classic work of kabbalah, while underscoring his rationalist and pragmatic attitude, and sets us to wondering about possible anti-kabbalistic sentiments on his part. This would be all the more significant because Livorno was a celebrated center of Jewish mystical studies in the eighteenth century.<sup>115</sup>

In an analogous vein of appreciation for historical accuracy and discriminating reconstruction based on the central aesthetic and critical notion of “buon gusto,” Attias briefly praised the recent translation into French of the *History of the Jews* by the British Orientalist Humphrey Prideaux (1648–1724),<sup>116</sup> observing that “it serves to fill the historical gap between the Old Testament and the New; it seems to me well-written and full of beautiful historical conjectures, *of good taste*, combined with the history of the monarchies of those times.”<sup>117</sup> While it should not surprise us that Attias, like many a Jew living in Catholic Italy (and all the more so those from a *converso* background), was familiar with the New Testament, he in fact owned a large collection of New Testament editions and commentaries.<sup>118</sup> Georg Christoph Martini, a painter from Saxony, who encountered Attias after he arrived in Livorno in 1725, was impressed by his host’s knowledge of the New Testament.<sup>119</sup> “He is an expert in all sciences,” the traveler wrote, “and owns a precious library of modern books. He lent some of them to

- 109 Provasi, "Giuseppe Attias Senior," 297. The letter was sent from Florence on July 4, 1728: "Prego dunque V.S. scusarmi e ringraziare l'Ill.mo Sig. Uberto Benvoglienti della memoria che conserva di questo suo buon servitore, e dirli che io non ho fatto alcuna nota alla Diplomatica del sig. Marc. Maffei, e suppongo che queste voci sieno corse e nate da un discorso tenuto col sig. Aud. Buonarruoti sull'origine degli Itali antichi. Si diceva che il sig. Marchese si fidò del Cristiano Adricomio e di alcuni Ebraizanti del suo paese; i quali non han distinto dalla famosa Città di עיר Capitale di una provincia della Palestina, alla città di עירער che era situata come Parigi parte sulla riva e parte sopra un'isoletta del fiume Arnon, prossima all'altra città detta ענטרת dalle quali pretende il detto autore trarre l'origine degli antichi Etruschi."
- 110 Attias owned a copy of Maffei's *Istoria diplomatica* and van Adrichem's work: item 505 Scipione Maffei Ist. Diplomatica. Mantova 1727; item 1045 Christiani Adrichomii Delphi, Theatrum Terrae Sanctae. Col. Agripp. in off. Birkmanica 1600.
- 111 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 3, p. 308: "Due baroni sardi sono stati ieri da me, e dopo un lungo e misterioso discorso sono usciti domandando La Clavicola di Salamone, ed essendomi proposto, benché contro la voglia loro, di disingannarli, per fine li ho persuasi a portar più tosto in Sardigna alcuni esemplari del di lei aureo libro delle Riflessioni sopra il buon gusto, dove potran trovare il modo di medicarsi di questo ed altri pregiudizi ed errori volgari."
- 112 Greek, Latin, Italian, French and English manuscripts containing versions of the text are extant. At least three eighteenth-century Hebrew copies are known: two are in the British Library, London (MS British Library Or. 6360, MS British Library Or. 14759), and one at the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Amsterdam (MS Rosenthaliana 12).
- 113 Muratori's critical methodology was based on a three-pronged system: ascertaining, sifting, and interpreting sources.
- 114 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 4, p. 309: "Averei caro di sapere che qualità di persona possa essere stato l'impostore ed inventore della sua Clavicola etc., ed in qual tempo possa essere stato composto; se poi è tanto sciocco, non merita la pena di ritenerlo né discorrervi sopra, perché qualunque persona erudita per scherzo ne potrebbe comporre uno che avesse maggiore apparenza d'opera di Salamone imitando l'idiotismi biblici, e trattando materie oscure e buio pesto a guisa del libro cabalistico Zoar."



me and was extremely courteous. ... He showed me his library and some volumes with the New Testament in various languages, and many commentaries on it. He discussed its matchless teachings, such as the precept to love your enemies, do good to those who curse us, etc.”<sup>120</sup>

A brief remark about the nature of biblical poetry suggests that Attias (possibly on the basis of medieval Jewish exegetes like Abraham Ibn Ezra and David Kimḥi) believed it neither rhymed nor metrical, well before the principle of parallelism was formulated by Robert Lowth.<sup>121</sup> “What you establish about ancient Biblical poetry,” wrote Attias, “has very solid foundations, unlike what sig. abbé Garofalo proposed, who I believe did some head-butting with Rabeni over rhyme and meter, which are not in the poetical texts of the Old Testament.”<sup>122</sup> The Livornese praised Muratori’s view of Hebrew poetry as well-grounded in reference to a recent debate between the Paduan Jewish physician Raffaele Rabeni and the Neapolitan Hebraist of Spinozist leanings, the abbé Biagio Garofalo. Ostensibly, the controversy, which caused a certain sensation in scholarly circles between 1710 and 1714, concerned an apparently innocuous topic: whether Biblical poetry was rhymed or metrical.<sup>123</sup> On closer examination, the two scholars were clashing over the textual authority of the Hebrew Bible and the accuracy of the Masoretic text.<sup>124</sup> Although Attias’ passing comment does not allow us to understand the extent to which he was attuned to the larger philosophical and religious implications of the controversy, it is evident that he disagreed with the Neapolitan abbé’s basic thesis.<sup>125</sup>

We may only speculate as to why Attias kept his observations on Jewish subjects to a minimum. The nature of the correspondence provides a clue; the absence of Muratori’s letters, however, makes all conjectures difficult. In all these cases, Attias presents himself as an expert on the matter, adopting a confident and matter-of-fact tone. His pithy comments are crisp and lucid, and speak of Attias’ equal familiarity with, and ostensibly equal appreciation of, classical Hebrew works and those by modern Christian Hebraists. On the one hand,

- 115 There is a vast bibliography on the subject. For an overview, see A. Lattes and A. Toaff, *Gli Studi Ebraici a Livorno nel Secolo XVIII. Malabì Accoen (1700–1771)* (Livorno, 1909). The most famous Livornese kabbalist of the early eighteenth century was Joseph Ergas (1685–1730), a contemporary of Attias. On Ergas, see R. Goetschel, “La notion de simsum dans le ‘Shomer emunim’ de Joseph Ergaz,” in G. Nahon and C. Touati, eds. *Hommage à Georges Vajda: Études d’histoire et de pensée juives* (Louvain, 1980), 385–96; R. Goetschel, “La Justification de la Kabbale dans le Shomer Emunim de Joseph Ergas (1685–1730),” in U. Haxen, H. Trautner-Kromann, and K. L. Goldschmidt Salamon, eds., *Jewish Studies in a New Europe: Proceedings of the Fifth Congress of Jewish Studies* (Copenhagen, 1994), 269–283; R. Goetschel, “Kawwanah et finalité de la prière dans le Shomer emunim de Joseph ben Emmanuel Ergaz (1685–1730),” in J. Targarona Borrás and A. Sáenz-Badillos, eds., *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: Proceedings of the Sixth EAJIS Congress* (Leiden and Boston, 1999), 34–39.
- 116 Attias referred to the *Histoire des Juifs et des peuples voisins, depuis la décadence des royaumes d’Israël and de Juda jusqu’à la mort de Jésus-Christ* (Paris, 1726). The title of Prideaux’s original English is more revealing of the author’s intention: *The Old and New Testament connected in the history of the Jews and neighbouring nations* (London, 1716–18).
- 117 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 12, p. 317. The concept of *buon gusto* (good taste) is central to the development of Italian aesthetics. For Muratori, and for Attias here, good taste was “a power of judging individual cases which cannot be decided according to universal rules.” In Muratori’s philosophy, the term is interchangeable with “judgment” and “accurate reasoning.” See P. P. Wiener, ed. *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (New York, 1973–74), 4: 354.
- 118 Item 2 Quatuor Evangelia ex Latino in Hebraicum versa ab Jo. Baptista Jona. Romae Typ. S. Congreg. P. Fidei 1668; item 3 Evangelia Araba cum Lat. Versione. Romae ex Typ. Medicea 1591; item 4 Novum J. C. Testamentum ex Bibliot. Regia. Lutetiae ex Offic. Roberti Stephani 1550. Graecum; item 25 [sic; should be 15] Jo. Calvini Harmonia Evangelica, cum ejusdem comm. Oliva Rob. Stephani 1555; item 16 Jo. Clerici Harmonia Evangelica, cui subiecta est Historia Christi. Amstel 1699; item 21 Biblia Sacr. Vet. Editionis Sixti V jussu recognita, et Clementis VIII Auctoritate edita.

when compared with contemporary exchanges between Jewish and Christian scholars, Attias' lack of Jewish emphasis is surprising.<sup>126</sup> On the other hand, this omission, coupled with the detached scholarly tone employed when he does touch on Jewish or Hebraic subjects, may be interpreted as Attias' acknowledgment that these matters needed to be incorporated into an existing antiquarian and philological canon, and should be treated as such.

### **Attias' Legal Knowledge**

Attias' library catalogue documents a profound interest in legal subjects, which at first sight may seem unusual for a Jewish man of his times.<sup>127</sup> New Christians who spent part of their adult lives in the Iberian Peninsula before moving to the Low Countries, England, or Italy to revert to Judaism, could receive university training in jurisprudence: this was the case of Attias' father.<sup>128</sup> In early modern Italy, however, Jews could acquire formal instruction in medicine and philosophy at some universities, such as Padua, but were not admitted to the study of law.<sup>129</sup> In theory, the *Livornina* edict granted full judicial autonomy to the Hebrew Nation of Livorno, but it is evident that Attias resorted to secular, non-Jewish courts, as did many of his fellow Jewish Livornese in most cases that involved monetary disputes. Although knowledge of mercantile and maritime law should be expected of the son of a merchant living in a commercial entrepôt, the widespread use of secular tribunals does not fully explain Attias' need to study civil, canon, and Roman law. The clue to Attias' interest is to be found in the fact that he was involved in a variety of legal disputes, private and public. Attias acted as the legal representative of his side of the family against the older siblings born of his father's first marriage: "Out of necessity, because of some disputes between members of my family," he wrote Muratori, "I had to apply myself to civil and canon law. I

- Lugduni 1688; item 22 Biblia S. Juxta Vulgatam editionem. Parisiis 1552. Tomi 4; item 23 Novum J. C. Testamentum Hebraico Latino Graecum. Parisiis 1584; item 24 Eliae Hutteri Nov. Testamentum Harmonicum, Hebraice, Graeco-Latine, et Grammaticae editum. Amst. 1615; item 27 Bernardi Lamy Commentarius in Harmoniam quatuor Evangelistarum. Parisiis 1699. Tomi 2; item 66 Novum Testamentum Graecum Versiculis distinctum. Parisiis 1582; item 67 Novum Testamentum Syriacum. Antuerpiae 1575; item 68 Evangelium secundum Matthaeum Hebraico-Latinum cum Notis Munsteri. Basileae 1552; item 69 Jo. Alberti Fabricii Nov. Testam. Condex [sic] apocryphus, Hamburgi 1719. Tomi 2.
- 119 Trumpy, “Un inedito incontro”, 5–12.
- 120 Ibid., 9. Martini, who must have been acquainted with Ashkenazi Jews in his home country, was especially struck by how little the latter’s home and library looked “Jewish”: “The first time I called on him, it did not seem to me that I was visiting the house of a Jew” (ibid.). The traveler continued with a descriptions of Attias’ apartments “that are really pleasant. The ceiling of a big room was frescoed. From time to time, he would hold a musical gathering, where he plays the cembalo very well, as well as other musical instruments. He does not work as a merchant, but lives on his income and capital.”
- 121 J. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its History* (New Haven, 1981).
- 122 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 7, p. 313.
- 123 The debate between Rabeni and Garofalo is discussed in the following works: G. Ricuperati, “Alle Origini del Triregno: La *Philosophia Adamitico-Noetica* di A. Costantino,” *Rivista Storica Italiana* 77 (1965): 602–38; E. Garms-Cornides, “Zur Geschichte der geistigen Beziehungen zwischen Österreich und Italien im 18. Jahrhundert: der Abate Biagio Garofalo,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 85 (1977): 77–97; V. Ferrone, *The Intellectual Roots of the Italian Enlightenment: Newtonian Science, Religion, and Politics in the Early Eighteenth-Century* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1995), 323 n. 29. Dario Generali in his edition of Vallisnieri’s *Epistolario* traced the debate and listed the works written as part of it. See A. Vallisnieri, *Epistolario*, ed. D. Generali, vol. 2, 1711–1713 (Milan, 1998), 134–36.
- 124 In his *Considerazioni di Biagio Garofalo intorno alla Poesia degli Ebrei e de i Greci* (Rome, 1707), Garofalo argued that the Bible’s poetical sections had originally been

served as my own counsel, acquainting the judges with the situation on my own behalf; therefore I had to get some books on Roman law. In addition, there was the torture of having to study statutory law, which is found in the handwritten, unpublished statutes attributed to Paolo di Castro, alongside a long series of laws and edicts published in the ‘city of laws,’ as Florence is called, and finally the legal statute of Livorno, commercial law, maritime law, and Jewish rites. Eventually I managed to acquire some peace thanks to my money and by knowing how to write up a deed or legal instrument with a more precise know-how than our inexperienced notaries.”<sup>130</sup>

These brief remarks open some unexpected vistas onto the legal savvy of Jews in early modern Italy. Attias also acted as the advocate of the Livornese Jewish community before government ministers in the Tuscan capital. An earlier letter from Florence, addressed by Attias to the Sienese scholar Benvoglianti on July 4, 1728, through their common friend Mornini, sheds some light on this point. In it, Attias laments his inability to reply promptly to his correspondents, as he is very busy with the affairs of his Nation: “Consider that not only do I not have a scribe, when I deal with an affair of my Nation with four high ministers (each of whom lives in the most remote corners of the City), I also do not have an attorney or a solicitor. I do this by myself, so that I can avoid the nuisance of having to wait in their offices and evade the malice of butcher-like lawyers.”<sup>131</sup> Attias was not in Florence on a chance errand in 1728. Between April of that year and July 1729 he established his residence there. It appears that he had gone to the capital on an important political mission and ended up staying to immerse himself in the world of learning and the erudite conversations that the Tuscan capital could offer. Already in 1726, the scholar had been in Florence, together with another Livornese Jew, Jacob Saccuto, to take care of some communal affairs.<sup>132</sup> The minutes of the “Deliberations of the Government” (*Deliberaçoims do Governo*) of the Livornese *Nazione Ebreá* confirm that Attias held various political offices, some of which

- rhymed; errors and inaccuracies by Jewish scribes, however, together with the late insertion of vowels by the Masoretes, had corrupted the original Hebrew text. This echoed the claims made by Baruch Spinoza in the seventh chapter of his *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*. On the contrary, Rabeni defended the divine, incorruptible nature of the Bible by insisting on the metrical nature of Hebrew poetry. Upholding the sacred nature of the revealed Hebrew text, Rabeni refuted the claim that the Masoretes had corrupted the Scripture, a claim that he perceived as potentially undermining traditional scriptural authority. Attias owned a copy of Garofalo's work: item 1125 Biagio Garofalo Considerazioni sopra la poesia degl'Ebrei. Roma 1707.
- 125 The debate was not limited to its two immediate protagonists, but carried public ramifications. Reviews of Garofalo's and Rabeni's works in the *Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia* fueled the debate and augmented the resonance of the controversy.
- 126 See, for instance, J. Dukas, "Lettres inédites écrites à Pereisc par Solomon Azubi Rabbin de Carpentras (1632–1633)," *Revue des Études Juives* 11 (1885): 101–25, 252–65; 12 (1886): 95–106; P. N. Miller, "The Mechanics of Christian-Jewish Intellectual Collaboration in Seventeenth-Century Provence: N.-C. Fabri de Peiresc and Salomon Azubi," in A. Coudert and J. Shoulson, eds., *Hebraica Veritas? Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia, 2004), 71–101; S. D. Luzzatto, "Correspondence between C. Theophile Unger and Isaac Hayyim Cantarini," in *Ozar Nechmad* 3 (1860), 128–49; G. A. Kohut, "The Hebrew Letters of Jacob Alting," in A. Marx and H. Meyer, eds. *Festschrift für Aron Freimann zum 60. Geburtstage* (Berlin, 1935), 70–76; B. D. Weinryb, "Un Hebraish-Yidish korespondenz tzvish'n Profesor Vagenzeil un Yid'n," *Gedank un Lebn* 2 (1944): 109–137.
- 127 The catalogue includes 115 volumes on legal subjects.
- 128 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 23, p. 325.
- 129 See A. Modena and E. Morpurgo, *Medici e chirurghi ebrei dottorati e licenziati nell'Università di Padova dal 1617 al 1816* (Bologna, 1967); D. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven, Conn., 1995), ch. 3. See also above, n. 6.
- 130 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 23, p. 326: "... per necessità, essendo nate delle liti fra la mia famiglia, bisognò che mi applicassi al gius

entailed traveling to Florence and negotiating with the grand duke and his ministers on behalf of the Livornese Jewish community.<sup>133</sup>

### **Attias' Role in the Livornese Jewish Community**

Attias was a member of the so-called "Government of the Sixty," a body of approximately sixty notables from the wealthiest Livornese Jewish families, most of them of Sephardi origin.<sup>134</sup> The "Sixty" were divided into three separate groups, from which were selected the *parnasim* or Massari (the secular heads of the *Nazione Ebraica*)<sup>135</sup> and various deputies in charge of matters related to the management of the community.<sup>136</sup> During the last decade of his life, Attias was elected *parnas* twice: in September 1731 and again in March 1736.<sup>137</sup> He also held a range of different offices. On December 16, 1727, he was chosen as a special deputy to plead with the grand duke in Florence and negotiate a tax reduction on behalf of the *Nazione Ebraica*, which had accumulated a large debt with the Tuscan authorities. The negotiation stretched over a period of more than a year and yielded a positive outcome. On February 13, 1729, the Jewish Government recorded the written reply (*rescritto*) of the grand duke of Tuscany, which reduced the community's taxes from 1000 *pezze* to 500 *scudi* per year.<sup>138</sup> On August 10, 1732, Attias was put in charge of a search for a Jewish midwife to serve Livornese Jewish women.<sup>139</sup> In October 1733, a Christian woman from Pistoia surreptitiously baptized and abducted a Jewish infant, daughter of Jacob and Rachel Moscato of Pisa. The case created much concern in the Jewish community of Livorno, which mobilized to defend the rights of the baby's parents before the grand duke and his ministers, as well as to request legal steps to avoid recurrences of this serious problem. Joseph Attias, among the Livornese Jewish notables charged with this mission, traveled to Pisa to lobby on behalf of the cause.<sup>140</sup>

civile e canonico, e facevo le mie consultazioni a mio favore informando i giudici, e questo mi pose in impegno di provedermi di libri legali alla romana, e in oltre v'era il tormento dello studio del gius statuario, che si trova negli statuti manuscritti che si dicano fatti da Pavolo di Castro e inediti, ed in una infinità di leggi e bandi pubblicati nella città delle leggi, che così dicesi Firenze, e per ultimo delle leggi dello statuto di Livorno, leggi mercantili, leggi maritime e riti ebraici. Ho conseguito per fine il procurarmi la pace a forza de' quattrini e saper distendere una scrittura o strumento con più precise intelligenze di ciò che fanno i nostri inesperti notari."

- 131 Provasi, "Giuseppe Attias Senior," 296–297: "Consideri che non solo, e non ho chi mi scriva, quando tratto un affare di mia nazione con quattro supremi ministri che ogni un di loro abita uno degli angoli più remoti della Città, non ho avvocato né sollecitatore facendo da me per sfuggire la noia di aspettare ne' loro studj, ed evitare la malizia de' Cavagliocchi e mozzorecchie."
- 132 ACIL, *Filza de Rescritos do Ano 1726 a 1734*, 33, carta 147r.
- 133 During the first two decades of the eighteenth century, the name Joseph Attias appears in the minutes in relation to various offices: on February 24, 1701, a Joseph son of Abraham Attias was put in charge of the Pious Society Passarinho for two years; on November 20, 1707, a Joseph Attias was elected "deputado e depositario da escola" (deputy in charge of matters relating to the synagogue) for two years; on September 15, 1712, Joseph Attias was chosen to be a member of a committee to supervise some modifications to the synagogue, including the building of a roof deck to hold the required booth for the Festival of Sukkot. In addition, a Joseph Attias was elected "parnas" of the community in 1709 and again in 1713. Because the name Joseph Attias was not uncommon, however, it is not certain whether the person mentioned in these records was "our" Joseph Attias or another Livornese Jew by the same name. Later minutes allow us to assess the savant's involvement in the Jewish Community with greater accuracy. From the 1720s he is consistently listed as "Joseph Attias Senior," the name by which he is recorded in many external sources.
- 134 The minutes of the government are in the particular mixture of Spanish and Portuguese spoken by the Sephardi Jews of Livorno. For the history of the Livornese system of government, see Toaff, *La nazione ebrea*, 155–78.
- 135 The voting system in Livorno was based on a 1638 decision rendered for the Pisa



In November 1733, the Livornese Jewish community conferred on Attias the title of *hakham*.<sup>141</sup> While scholars have known this fact for a long time, there have been no attempts to assess Attias' activity as a rabbi. Let us review the available evidence. In 1735 the Florentine printer Francesco Moücke published a *maḥzor* for the High Holidays according to the Sephardi rite, mainly destined for the use of the Livornese *Nazione Ebraica*. The edition was endorsed in Portuguese by the *parnasim* of the Jewish community of Livorno and contained two official approbations in Hebrew (*haskamot*). One was signed on 18 Sivan 5495 (June 8, 1735) by the most illustrious rabbinical figures of the Livorno congregation, including "Joseph Attias senior," Gabriel del Rio, Eliezer ha-Cohen, David Meldola, Jacob Lusena, Malachi ha-Cohen, and Moses son of Samuel ha-Cohen.<sup>142</sup> From the *Deliberations of the Government* of Livorno we also learn that at least once Attias recited the "Mi-she-berakh" blessing that customarily followed the election of two members of the community as *hatan Torah* (Bridegroom of Torah) and *hatan Bereshit* (Bridegroom of Genesis), the honors of being called up, respectively, to conclude the Torah reading cycle and begin the new cycle on the Festival of *Simḥat Torah*.<sup>143</sup> Finally, Attias participated with six other Livornese rabbis—Daniel Valensin, David son of Abraham Meldola, Isaac Enriques, Adam Bondi, Jacob Lusena, and Malachi son of Jacob ha-Cohen—in the preparation of a legal opinion issued on July 24, 1738, from the "public and common yeshiva" of the port city, and recorded at a government meeting five days later. The *parnasim* had requested that the rabbis render a halakhic opinion about the nomination of legal guardians to supervise the education and inheritance of orphans. The rabbis maintained that nobody could resign from such a position, if selected, except for the following: a person under twenty; a person over sixty; a chronically ill person; a person with five children still at home; a person already acting as somebody else's guardian; a foreigner; and a person bound to leave Livorno within the next six months.<sup>144</sup> Our scant documentation does not suggest that

community by the Tuscan authorities and taken over by the Livornese nation in 1644. The *parnasim* were not elected: rather, their names were drawn from a bag containing the names of the eligible candidates. There were two such lotteries a year, one in late March or April and one in September. After each round, the names of the proposed *parnasim* (usually four to six) were submitted to the grand duke, who confirmed two or three of the candidates. Attias was among the “finalists” for the office of *parnas* on Apr. 11, 1723; Sept. 7, 1727; Mar. 21, 1728; Mar. 28, 1730; and Mar. 27, 1735; however, his name was not selected. On Apr. 3, 1729, Attias’ name was selected, but the grand duke did not confirm him. Attias was not eligible on Sept. 12, 1729, Sept. 10, 1730, and Sept. 4, 1735, because members of his family (Isaac son of Moses Attias, Joseph son of Moses Attias, Abram de Moura) were already serving as *parnasim*.

- 136 This included, among other things, tax collection and tax negotiations with the Tuscan authorities; charity and pious societies; the Jewish school system; and the management and upkeep of the synagogue and the Jewish cemetery. The deputies were elected.
- 137 DdG, book D, n. 19, c102r, Sept. 23, 1731; book E, n. 148, c17r, Mar. 18, 1736.
- 138 DdG, book D, n. 190, c63r, Dec. 16, 1727; book D, n. 200, c66r, July 26, 1728; book D, n. 213, c70r, Feb. 13, 1729.
- 139 DdG, book D, n. 41, c109r, Aug. 10, 1732. Saul Bonfil and David Sulema were also selected as deputies. See also DdG, book D, n. 101, c129r, Dec. 27, 1733.
- 140 DdG, book D, n. 98, c128r, Oct. 20, 1733; book D, n. 99, c128v, Nov. 8, 1733.
- 141 The rabbinic title of *hakham* is used in Sephardi communities, where it is considered superior to *maskil* and *haver*. In the autobiographical letter to Muratori dated Nov. 20, 1733, Attias mentions that “just last week [his] Nation declared [him] a rabbi” (di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, p. 327). In Sept. 1733, the name of Joseph Attias was listed in the book of the Deliberations of the Government of Livorno together with the inferior title *maskil*, customarily conferred on rabbinic students (DdG, book D, n. 95, c127r, Sept. 3, 1733). After November 1733, Attias’ name is always accompanied by the title *hakham* when it occurs in the Deliberations of the Government: DdG, book D, n. 101, c129r, Dec. 27, 1733; book D, n. 10, c136v, Apr. 13, 1734; book E, n. 128, c8v, Mar. 27, 1735; book E, n. 131, c10v, June 12, 1735; book E, n. 133, c12v, Sept. 4, 1735; book E, n. 140, c15v, Dec. 8, 1735; book E, n. 148, c16v, Mar. 18, 1736; book E, n. 153, c19r, July 23, 1736; book E, n. 156, c19v, Aug. 22,

the activity as *hakham* was Attias' main preoccupation in his old age; yet he certainly did fulfill some rabbinic duties within the community.

### Joseph Attias and the Republic of Letters

Despite the Jewish records just mentioned, the fact remains that we know Attias primarily through his activities and his relationships with non-Jewish men of letters. Attias corresponded with some of the most eminent scholars of his time, thus helping build the eighteenth-century Republic of Letters. The Livornese savant entertained these social and intellectual contacts as a peer, based on his expertise and learning, with no need to justify his Judaism. He communicated with his Christian correspondents as an equal. His letters never betray more obsequiousness than we would expect from eighteenth-century writing, unlike for instance the letters of the Amsterdam Sephardi author Isaac de Pinto to Voltaire.<sup>145</sup> Attias' non-Jewish correspondents evidently considered him fit to participate in the Republic of Letters, despite his Jewishness.<sup>146</sup>

Attias' "literary commerce" was a cultural project in and of itself: through his body of letters, the Jewish scholar participated in a collective effort aimed at creating networks for the circulation of information and ideas, which engaged humanists and scientists in both the heart and the periphery of European culture, in its centers of intellectual ferment as well as in its sleepier provinces. This epistolary social sphere was usually related to the acquisition or distribution of books and specimens. At a basic level, this endeavor ensured the progress of scholarship, promoting opportunities for research and discoveries at a time when few scholars had access to journals and new books, not to speak of primary documents. This sort of literary correspondence also profoundly shaped and transformed eighteenth-century culture, eventually bringing about the emergence and legitimization of a new

social role, of which Attias seems to represent a Jewish version: a scholar rooted in a cooperative intellectual universe, no longer wholly dependent on one patron, and actively engaged with social and political processes.<sup>147</sup>

Attias kept abreast of the latest literary news by subscribing to journals and through his familiarity with booksellers. As we saw, Attias' library included many scholarly periodicals, which contained abstracts and reviews of recent publications and functioned as one of the principal ways to distribute knowledge in Europe.<sup>148</sup> His

1736; book E, n. 163, c23r, Nov. 18, 1736; book E, n. 170, c24r, Mar. 5, 1737; book E, n.n., c25r, Mar. 25, 1737; book E, n. 184, c43r, Sept. 15, 1737; book E, n. 207, c50r, Mar. 30, 1738; book E, n. 218, c54r, July 29, 1738.

<sup>142</sup> The other approbation was signed by the Florentine rabbi Judah Raphael Joshua b. Phineas Barukh from Monselice, at the end of Sivan of the same year.

<sup>143</sup> DdG, book E, n. 156, c21rv, Aug. 22, 1736. Attias paid twice in order to be excluded from the "election bag" for the honors of *Hatan Torah* and *Hatan Bereshit*: DdG, book D, n. 64, c110v, Sept. 10, 1732; book D, n. 95, c126r, Sept. 3, 1733.

<sup>144</sup> DdG, book E, n. 218, c54v, July 29, 1738.

<sup>145</sup> A. Sutcliffe, "Can a Jew be a Philosophe? Isaac de Pinto, Voltaire, and Jewish Participation in the European Enlightenment," *Jewish Social Studies* 6 (2000): 31–51.

<sup>146</sup> All the observations about the Livornese savant found in parallel epistolary exchanges are positive, with a constant emphasis on the traits of politeness and gentlemanly behavior. He was called a "Jewish gentleman" (*gentiluomo ebreo*), a "virtuoso," who "has a beautiful way of dealing with people."

<sup>147</sup> The literature on the Republic of Letters is vast. For an initial orientation, see Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*; Bots and Waquet, eds., *Commercium Litterarium*; eidem, *La République des lettres* (Paris, 1997), and the references there.

<sup>148</sup> Consider, for instance: item 1122 Giornale de' Letterati dal 1668 al 1675. Roma 1676. T. 4; item 1124 Notizia de' Libri rari nella lingua Ital. Ven. 1728; item 1138 J. Le Clerc. Biblioteque Choisie. Ams. 1712. Tom. 28; item 1139 J. Le Clerc. Bibliot. Ancienne, et

correspondence confirms that he was familiar with the *Bibliothèque choisie* published by the Huguenot Jean Le Clerc, whose book reviews he held in high esteem; with the *Bibliothèque angloise*, which provided information on English literature; and with the *Giornale de' letterati*, published in Venice by Apostolo Zeno.<sup>149</sup> Two booksellers who provided him with a further entryway into the world of letters feature prominently in his correspondence: the Livornese Donato Donati, whose shop served also as a gathering place for local readers thirsty for literary news;<sup>150</sup> and the Geneva bookseller Bousquet, with whom Muratori, too, corresponded.<sup>151</sup> Finally, through his connections with the scholarly world in Pisa and Florence, Attias knew ahead of time of certain publishing enterprises that involved friends and acquaintances and offered his correspondents bits of information about them.

Communication among eighteenth-century scholars, as well as exchanges of texts and scientific specimens, relied essentially on the postal service by land, and on maritime and fluvial networks. Because postage could be quite expensive, learned information, books, and samples were also sent by alternative carriers, such as travelers, booksellers, and peddlers; personal delivery helped create and strengthen scholarly bonds.<sup>152</sup> Because of its location, the port of Livorno must have played a central role in the European-wide phenomenon of the *commerce de lettres*. It is precisely Livorno's importance as a Mediterranean port that made Attias enviably located to serve as a liaison in the intellectual web that increasingly connected European men of letters across different countries and creeds.<sup>153</sup> Moreover, as a Sephardi Jew, Attias entertained privileged contacts with other communities of Iberian origin, such as Amsterdam: this made him especially suited to guarantee safe delivery of letters and books on behalf of fellow scholars, through Jewish commercial agents.

Attias' correspondence provides ample evidence of his activity as a scholarly go-between, particularly with Protestant scholars. Prodded by his English acquaintances in Livorno—his friend Benjamin Crow,

moderne. Ams. 1714. Manca Tom. 18 parte prima, tutto il 19. 21. 24. 25 sono in tutto n. 49; item 1140 Jo. Clerici *Ars Critica*. Ams. 1712. Tomi 3; item 1141 *Le Journal des Scavans* Tom. 37 *mancano Tom. 12. 21. 49. 50. 51. 63. 65. 66. 67 legati in vacchetta*; item 1142 *Le Mercure Ollandois* contenant les choses plus remarquables de toute la Terre du 1672 au 1678. Ams. 1678. Tom. 12; item 1144 *Nouvelle de la Republique des Lettres de l'an. 1686 au 1688*. Ams. Tom. 4 par M. Pierre Daile; item 1178 *Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia*. *Mancano il T. 8. 13. 15. 21. 23. 25. 26. T. 16 in tutto*.

- 149 In addition, Attias subscribed to several Italian and foreign periodicals, listed in his library catalogue together with study aids and bibliographic tools. On Italian periodicals in the early modern period, see C. Capra, V. Castronovo, and G. Ricuperati, *La stampa italiana dal Cinquecento all'Ottocento* (Bari, 1976).
- 150 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 2, p. 307. Attias complained that “in this country everyone is busy and immersed in their own businesses, so there are no conversations or literary gatherings. I must pass my time as best I can, attracting some foreigners encountered by chance in the local stores or the shop of sig. Donato Donati, and getting them to my place with the excuse of seeing some few books I have been putting together” (ibid.). We also know Donati from the title page of Denis Petau’s *Opus de doctrina temporis* (Antwerp, 1703), which advertises the book as “sold in Livorno in the shop of Donato Donati.”
- 151 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 4, p. 309. As Attias informed Muratori on Feb. 9, 1725, Donati carried Muratori’s book *Della Carità*, which he sold for 8 *paoli*, as well as the first three volumes of his *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, the great collection of medieval documents on Italian history. The bookseller also sold the *Opera Omnia* of the Belgian canonist Van Espen (1646–1728), for nine *pezze* unbound. This item was in great demand after the publication of the *Historia civile* by Pietro Giannone (1676–1748). In the same letter, Attias told his friend that he had recently acquired from Bousquet the *Historia Ecclesiastica* by the twelfth-century Benedictine monk Hugh of Fleury, “tomi 20 in duodecimo, edizione d’Olanda,” together with the Supplement to the first two editions of Pierre Bayle’s *Dictionnaire*, recently printed in Geneva, and a few other small French books. Bousquet also showed him some of the first sheets of his edition of Machiavelli in duodecimo, and a French translation of Sextus Empiricus’ *Pyrrhonian Institutions* (which Attias did not

minister to the local English community,<sup>154</sup> and the British consul, Brinley Skinner (fl. 1722–1740)<sup>155</sup>—Attias turned to Muratori on November 10, 1724, to acquire a volume on behalf of William Wake (1657–1737), Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>156</sup> The English prelate had been looking in vain for a copy of the eighth volume of the *Museo Farnese*. This tome on ancient coins and medals, very much in vogue at the time, was not for sale, but could be obtained only by special grace of the duke of Parma.<sup>157</sup> In exchange for the book, Attias offered to reciprocate the favor, in accordance with the code of conduct that regulated book-swapping in the Republic of Letters: should the contributors to the work ever need any rare English editions, Mr. Skinner could have them shipped over from Britain. Attias even added, as further reassurance, that in the past he himself had presented the king of England with a copy of Homer edited by the Florentine classicist Antonio Maria Salvini. King George had thanked him with a gift of one hundred guineas.<sup>158</sup> Attias' own interest in modern English culture was facilitated by his privileged position in Livorno: the British commercial fleet played by far the most important economic role in the Tuscan port city, which as a result hosted a thriving British community. These ties suggest a network of scholarly communication that paralleled and clearly took advantage of established commercial routes.<sup>159</sup>

An almost contemporary exchange between Attias and Giambattista Vico provides another example of the former's role as cultural intermediary.<sup>160</sup> Attias served as a liaison to circulate copies of the philosopher's *Scienza Nuova* to international colleagues.<sup>161</sup> We may surmise that Vico sought out Attias' help because of the latter's privileged location in Livorno, which made it easier to ship parcels to distant destinations. Attias' foreign contacts represented a safe avenue of circulation and diffusion of culture beyond Catholic circles: Vico used Attias' good offices to send a copy of the *Scienza Nuova* to the Swiss Protestant theologian and editor Jean Le Clerc in the Low Countries, as well as to Isaac Newton in England.<sup>162</sup> Attias' friend Benjamin Crow

- buy, as he was waiting for the Greek-Latin version edited by Fabricius, which Jean Le Clerc had praised in his journal). In a subsequent letter, dated July 26, 1726, Attias mentioned a bookpeddler from the Tuscan town of Pontremoli, who during his last visit to Livorno had sold him Muratori's *Della perfetta poesia italiana*, annotated by the Abbé Salvini.
- 152 Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, 17.
- 153 On the various functions of the port of Livorno and an overview of imports and exports, see Filippini, *Il porto di Livorno*, 1: 39–73.
- 154 On the history of the British Nation in Livorno, see VV.AA., *Atti del Convegno di studi 'Gli inglesi a Livorno e all'Isola d'Elba' (sec. XVII–XIX)* (Livorno, 1980); G. Pagano de Divitiis, *Mercanti inglesi nell'Italia del Seicento. Navi, traffici, egemonie* (Venice, 1990); eadem, "Il porto di Livorno fra Inghilterra e Oriente," *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 1 (1993): 43–87.
- 155 Skinner is usually referred to as "Signor Schinner" in Attias' correspondence. For information on the British consuls in seventeenth-century Livorno, see S. Villani, "I consoli della nazione inglese a Livorno tra il 1665 e il 1673: Joseph Kent, Thomas Clutterbuck e Ephraim Skinner," *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 11 (2004): 11–34. Ephraim Skinner was possibly related to the later consul Brinley Skinner.
- 156 The Anglican Wake is known for his eirenistic sermons on behalf of Christian unity and his negotiations to unite Gallican and Anglican churches against Rome; see N. Sykes, *William Wake: Archbishop of Canterbury, 1657–1737* (Cambridge, 1957). Wake was a protagonist of the English Christian circle that promoted the study of the Mishnah: see D. B. Ruderman, *Connecting the Covenants: Judaism and the Search for Christian Identity in Eighteenth Century England* (Philadelphia, 2007).
- 157 Di Campi and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta...* Azzi, letter 1, pp. 305–306. Attias owned a copy of the book: item 470 Paolo Pedrusi. I Cesari in Metallo grande, e parte de' medesimi in mezzano, raccolti nel Museo Farnese. Parma 1721. T. 8.
- 158 Attias' English connection represented a source of curiosity and stimulation for Muratori, who in a following exchange asked his Livornese correspondent to lend him some of the English books in his library. In his letter to Muratori of Dec. 5, 1727, Attias listed the English editions he owned that might be of interest to him (but only after repeating the familiar stereotype of the illiterate and uncultured merchant,



shipped Vico's book to London along with four tenth-century Hebrew manuscripts, which Attias addressed to the English divine Conyers Middleton (1683–1750), then head librarian at Cambridge.<sup>163</sup> As for the parcel and letter addressed to Jean Le Clerc, Attias sent them to a friend in Amsterdam to make “absolutely sure,” as he stated on February 25, 1726, that they reach the Huguenot scholar's hands.<sup>164</sup>

### **Attias and the Scientific Culture of his Times**

Attias' first biographer, Giovanni Gualberto de Soria, noted his lack of advanced proficiency in the sciences.<sup>165</sup> Perhaps as a consequence of this early dismissal, Attias' keen interest in scientific culture has never been emphasized. Yet Attias supplemented his early education with scientific studies, learning arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy “from somebody called Piselli, a good engineer who died in the Gaeta siege.”<sup>166</sup> He also traveled to Florence, where he studied “Aristotelian philosophy *with some new modifications* from sig. Giannetti, whose brother is now a lecturer in Pisa.”<sup>167</sup> The holdings in Attias' library tell a similar story. As mentioned above, the catalogue's principal subgroup is a miscellaneous category of 270 volumes, most of them on the natural sciences, physics, and medicine.<sup>168</sup> The section contains many recent editions, such as the complete works of Galileo published in 1718;<sup>169</sup> writings by Newton;<sup>170</sup> many works by Descartes;<sup>171</sup> atomist and skeptical texts, including a 1725 French edition of Sextus Empiricus;<sup>172</sup> a French translation of Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*;<sup>173</sup> as well as works by Vico,<sup>174</sup> Redi,<sup>175</sup> Muratori,<sup>176</sup> Antonio Cocchi<sup>177</sup> and the avant-garde of European critical-scientific culture.<sup>178</sup> Accordingly, we must reconsider evidence found in Attias' correspondence in light of his library's holdings, so as to better appreciate his participation in the scientific world of his time and to reconstruct a long-ignored aspect of his intellectual inquiries.

claiming that the British traders in Livorno were not interested in books: even their minister Benjamin Crow was too busy to share literary news from his home country with him!). Among them, he listed the *Spectator*, Boccaccio's novellas in English translation, some posthumous works by Bacon, the influential geological treatise *Sacred Theory of the Earth* by Thomas Burnet (1635–1715), and *Britannia*, the road atlas prepared by the English cartographer John Ogilby (1600–1676). Burnet's book (listed in the catalogue as item 42. Thomae Burnetii Telluris Theorica Sacra. Ams. 1699) was prohibited and placed on the Index on Apr. 13, 1739.

- 159 These are the English books that Attias lent Muratori, based on a list on the verso of his letter of Sept. 16, 1728: Boccaccio's novellas in folio; the *State of London* by Chamberlain in octavo; the Old Testament in quarto; the New Testament in quarto; "raccolte istoriche d'alcuni fatti de' Parlamenti" in octavo; "discorsi intorno l'immortalità dell'anima del Sherlock" in octavo; "opere postume di Bacone, civili istoriche politiche e theologiche" in folio; "teoria sacra della terra di Burnet, in folio" (di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 13, p. 318).
- 160 Vico mentions Attias in the additions to his autobiography (1731), in relation to the publication of his *Scienza Nuova*. The philosopher had met Attias in Naples, because they traveled in the same intellectual circles. A common acquaintance was Father Roberto Sostegni, a Florentine *canonico lateranense* and man of letters in his own right, who had studied with Salvini and frequented scientific and literary circles in Naples (Vico, *Autobiografia*, 55–56, 61–62).
- 161 Attias gave Vico's book to local scholars as well: Giuseppe Averani in Pisa and Anton Maria Salvini in Florence.
- 162 "Uscita alla luce la *Scienza Nova*, tra gli altri ebbe cura l'autore di mandarla al signor Giovanni Clerico ed eleggè via più sicura per Livorno, ove l'inviò con lettera a quello indiritta in un pacchetto al signor Giuseppe Attias, con cui aveva contratto amicizia qui in Napoli..." Vico wrote Attias from Naples on Nov. 3, 1725. Based on this letter, we know that Attias spent time in Naples at a time when there was no Jewish community in that city, and befriended some of its intellectuals. See V. Giura, "Gli ebrei e la ripresa economica del Regno di Napoli (1740–1747)," in V. Giura, *Storie di minoranze. Ebrei, greci, albanesi nel Regno di Napoli* (Naples, 1984), 9–112. In a follow-up letter to Le Clerc (Nov. 5, 1725), Vico asked the Huguenot scholar to

Attias' letters to Muratori provide an excellent springboard for an exploration of the Livornese scholar's scientific and pharmacological interests. The editors of the correspondence between Muratori and Attias present it as evidence of the latter's encyclopedic interests and eclectic culture.<sup>179</sup> It is my contention that the letters point to a definite cultural circle with a clear intellectual and political agenda: the Galilean school in Pisa. Rather than take a merely descriptive approach, we need to place the exchange between Attias and Muratori in the context of Tuscan and Italian cultural history. While the information we are able to garner from Attias' correspondence indeed testifies to his intellectual breadth and curiosity, the letters are peppered with a specific selection of literary and scientific news, as well as names of Italian and foreign scholars, which anchor him in a precise intellectual milieu. As we saw, Attias had friends in both the humanistic and scientific worlds. It is his connections to the latter, however, that allow us to appreciate the innovative nature of his scholarly interests more deeply. The precarious relationship between scientific pursuits and religion in the early eighteenth century offers a lens through which we can better understand some aspects of Attias' universe. Before we turn to his scientific activities, therefore, a few words on early-Enlightenment Tuscan culture are in order, to fully understand the context of this scholar's inquiries.<sup>180</sup>

The beginnings of modern physics at the University of Pisa, in the early eighteenth century, progressed amid a cultural struggle that pitted the exponents of the old Aristotelian school against the so-called *novatori*, younger researchers with anti-Jesuit and freemasonic inclinations influenced by Galilean experimentalism or atomism.<sup>181</sup> In his classic *Settecento riformatore*, Franco Venturi argued that the Galilean tradition of science and scholarship was able to continue in Tuscany more than in any other Italian region. The nourishing experiences of the Renaissance and the scientific flowering of the seventeenth century, he maintained, kept infusing life into every aspect

- send him a reply through Attias. Vico erroneously believed that Attias published a commentary on the Hebrew Bible.
- 163 Attias mistakenly believed Conyers Middleton to be head librarian at Oxford. The Anglican cleric, who is known for his attempt to demonstrate the fraudulent character of early Church miracles, which brought down on his head charges of being an infidel, had visited Rome and Naples years before. It is likely that Attias and Middleton met in Naples. On Middleton, see Ruderman, *Connecting the Covenants*.
- 164 Attias' own answer to the philosopher is a model of good manners and civility. At the start of the letter, Attias evoked the pleasant memory of his friendship with Vico and other men of letters who graciously showed him favor during his stay in Naples. As evidence of his friend's kindness, Attias recalled how Vico honored him with copies of his works, adding that he was so flattered by Vico's closeness that he would boast to the intimate friends of his *conversazione* (i.e., his literary gathering), as well as the scholars he had met during his trips around Italy and France (Vico, *Autobiografia*, 56). To this remark Attias added Le Clerc's positive comments on Vico's work, which he read in the former's *Bibliothèque choisie*. Vico sent Attias a copy to keep for himself: "I thank you very much for the copy you gave me, which we read in our *conversazione*." Vico's *Scienza Nuova* is not listed in Attias' library catalogue, however.
- 165 See above, p. 106.
- 166 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 23, p. 325.
- 167 Ibid.; emphasis added. The brother of Attias' philosophy teacher was Pascasio Giannetti. See below. Attias also studied music and could play the harpsichord and the double harp.
- 168 The three subgroups in the "scientific" section of Attias' library were catalogued as follows: (1) "Filosofi, Geometri, Medici, Naturalisti, Arti etc. In foglio," items 769–819; (2) "Filosofi etc. In quarto," items 820–928; (3) "Filosofi etc. In ottavo et infra," items 929–1038. The section also contains texts on applied mathematics, music, and commerce. In the following references I have kept the original spelling of the catalogue.
- 169 Item 857, Galileo Galilei Opere. Fir. 1718. Tomi 3; item 860, G. Galilei Dialogo sopra i due sistemi Copernicano e Tolemaico. Fir. 1632.

of Tuscan culture, at a time of general decline for the Italian intellectual world.<sup>182</sup> This process, however, was by no means smooth or linear. During the second and third decades of the eighteenth century, the Tuscan intellectual avant-garde was intent on reviving the scientific debate stifled by the repressive policies of Grand Duke Cosimo III de' Medici (ruled 1670–1723).<sup>183</sup> The grand duke banned the teaching of *filosofia democritica ovvero degli atomi* (“Democritean philosophy, that is atomism”) and all doctrines contrary to Aristotelianism at the University of Pisa on October 10, 1691.<sup>184</sup> Towards the end of his reign, Cosimo’s cultural policies were increasingly shaped by reactionary influences. Nevertheless, during the last decades of Medici rule in Tuscany the University of Pisa did manage to maintain a modest role as a defender of certain research and experimental methods, preserving limited freedom in the area of scientific analysis, and especially in mathematics and jurisprudence.<sup>185</sup> When Cosimo’s son Gian Gastone, an admirer of Leibniz and reputed Freemason, succeeded his father in 1723, the intellectual climate at Pisa became more favorable to the *novatori*. The invocation of *libertas philosophandi*, the Galilean emphasis on experiments, the questioning of Cartesian scholasticism, and a marked interest in English science played an important role in the definition of the new Tuscan scientific culture. One of the main by-products of this intellectual endeavor was a reevaluation of practical, sensible, and utilitarian Epicurean morality. This rediscovery of Epicurean philosophy was stripped of its atheistic overtones and couched in terms that could be palatable to a Catholic audience.<sup>186</sup>

### Attias’ Scientific Network

A majority of the learned friends and acquaintances mentioned in Attias’ correspondence came from a Galilean milieu. The Livornese savant interacted with most of the Tuscan intellectuals in the Galilean,

- 170 Item 820, Isaci Newton Philosophiae Naturalis principia Mathematica. Ams. 1723; item 964, Newton Traite d'optique trad. par Cosse. Ams. 1720. Tomi 2. see also item, 931, Ggravesand [sic] Institut. Philosophiae Newtonianae. Lug. Bat. 1723. These were not the only works by Newton that Attias owned: item 494 Isach Neuuton [sic] Te Cronologii of ancient Ringdoms [sic] amended. London 1728.
- 171 Item 825, Renati Des Cartes de Homine, et de formatione foetus. Ams. per Dan. Elzivir 1677; item 826, Renati Des Cartes Meditationes de prima Philosophia. Ams. per Jo. Blaeu 1644; item 827, Renati Des Cartes Responsiones ad obiectiones in meditationes de prima Philosophia. Amst. 1685; item 835, Renati Des-Cartes principia Philosophiae. Ams. ap. Lud. Elzivir 1650; item 840, Renati Des Cartes Epistolae. Ams. per Dan. Elzivir 1648. Tomi 2; item 845, Renati Des Cartes. Geometria. Ams. ap. Elzivir 1659; item 940, Renati Des Cartes Passiones Animae. Ams. ap Elzevirios 1650.
- 172 Item 770, Epicuri Philosophia per Petrum Gassendum. Lug. 1675; item 955, Sextus Empiricus les Hippotiposes trad. en Francois avec des Notes. 1725.
- 173 Item 853, Locke Essay philosophique sur l'entendement humain trad. de l'Anglois par Coste. Ams. 1700. On this French translation, see Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, 117–119.
- 174 Item 696 Jo. Baptistae Vici de nostri temporis stud. dissertatio. 1708; item 941, Jo. Bap. a Vico de Antiquissima Itolorum Sapientia [1710].
- 175 Item 983, Francesco Redi Opera sopra diverse Cose Naturali. Nap. 1687. Tomi 3.
- 176 Item 1015, Lod. Ant. Muratori del Governo della Peste. Modena 1714. Attias also owned Muratori's *Della perfetta poesia italiana*, listed under a different category: item 638, Lod. Muratori la perfetta poesia Italiana. Ven. 1724. Tomi 2.
- 177 Item 898, Antonii Cocchi Epistolae Medicae. Romae 1725; item 902, Antonii Cocchi de usu Artis Anatomicae. Flor. 1736.
- 178 For instance, item 957, Recueil de diverses pieces Philosophiques de M. Leibnitz. Clarke, Newton etc. Ams. 1720. Tomi 2.
- 179 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, 303.
- 180 For an overview of eighteenth-century Tuscan scientific culture, see E. W. Cochrane, "Nature, Science, and the Cosmos," in E. W. Cochrane, *Tradition and Enlightenment in the Tuscan Academies, 1690–1800* (Rome, 1961), 109–56.

anti-Aristotelian, and anti-Jesuit camp, whose fortune and influence surged after the death of Cosimo III. In Pisa and Florence Attias met with scientists such as the botanist Michelangelo Tilli (1655–1742), director of the University Botanical Gardens (*Giardino dei Semplici*), whose successful experiments on exotic species are discussed in Attias' letters;<sup>187</sup> Pier Antonio Micheli (1679–1737), professor at Pisa and prefect of the botanical gardens in Florence, who is considered the father of mycology;<sup>188</sup> and the anatomist Antonio Cocchi (1695–1758), a noted Freemason.<sup>189</sup> Attias' association with the University of Pisa and the Galilean school is reinforced by his interaction with some of its most innovative scholar-administrators, such as Padre Gaspare Cerati, the *provveditore generale* who oversaw the reform of the university,<sup>190</sup> and the *rettore* (dean) of the university, Giovanni Paolo Gualtieri.<sup>191</sup>

Moreover, Attias interacted with some of the key experimental scientists at the university. Attias could not legally study at the University of Pisa, which did not admit Jewish students until 1737, two years before his death. His connections to Pisa professors, then, seem all the more remarkable. His mathematics teacher in Florence was a student of Vincenzo Viviani's (d. 1703), the disciple of Galileo who had inherited his master's papers and devoted much effort to rehabilitating his memory.<sup>192</sup> On several occasions Attias held learned conversations, including a discussion at the *Collegio della Sapienza* in Pisa, with Giuseppe Averani (1662–1738),<sup>193</sup> a professor of law at the University of Pisa and a member of the Royal Society of London; Pascasio Giannetti, a physician and professor of philosophy at the University of Pisa;<sup>194</sup> and the mathematician Luigi Guido Grandi.<sup>195</sup> Michelangelo Tilli and Averani were famous in their day for their experiments with Boyle's pneumatic machine.<sup>196</sup> Between 1710 and 1718, Grandi, Averani, and Cerati were involved in the publication of Galileo's works. This enterprise was crowned with success only after many difficulties; yet, despite all its limitations, it made the works of the great Pisan newly accessible to readers and part of the shared

- 181 Verga, "La cultura del Settecento," 125–52, esp. 126–27.
- 182 Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, 21–22.
- 183 On Cosimo III, see F. Diaz, *Il Granducato di Toscana. I Medici* (Turin, 1976), 465–522.
- 184 *Ibid.*, 506.
- 185 *Ibid.*, 510–11. Despite his veto of Galilean science and atomistic philosophy, the grand duke subsidized a pneumatic pump in Pisa, which was used to demonstrate the existence of the vacuum and thereby provide experimental refutation of many Aristotelian theories. From the end of the seventeenth century there was a *macchina filosofica*, i.e., Boyle's pneumatic pump, in a room attached to the Botanical Gardens, the *fonderia*. This room served as a scientific laboratory for various experiments, including on the propagation of sound and light with the so-called *specchio ustorio*. Some historians have interpreted this contradictory decision as a sign of the confusion that marred Cosimo III's cultural policy. See R. Vergara Caffarelli, "Esperimenti con il vuoto nel primo Settecento a Pisa," <http://www.fondazionegalileogalilei.it/centro/scienza/articoli/vuoto>
- 186 Ferrone, *Intellectual Roots*, 41–62. Epicurus' philosophy became central to attempts at developing lay morals during the early modern period. Works in defense of Epicurus started appearing in the first half of the seventeenth century. See A. Tenenti, "La polemica sulla religione di Epicuro nella prima metà del Seicento," *Studi Storici* 1 (1959): 227–43.
- 187 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 6, p. 312 (pineapple); letter 7, p. 313 (pineapple); letter 8, p. 314 (coffee, euphorbia, aloe). See also Cochrane, "Nature, Science, and the Cosmos," 130–34.
- 188 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 17, p. 321. Attias informed Muratori that during a 16-month stay in Florence (April 1728 to July 1729) he had spent much enjoyable time with Cocchi and Micheli in the Botanical Gardens. Together with Micheli, Cocchi reestablished the Botanical Society of Florence in 1734.
- 189 *Ibid.*, letter 12, p. 317; letter 14, p. 318. On Cocchi, see the entry in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 3:451–61; see also F. Sbigoli, *Tommaso Crudeli e i primi framassoni in Firenze* (Milan, 1884), 92–103; M. A. Timpanaro, "Francesco di



scientific vocabulary.<sup>197</sup> Finally, the same Galilean empiricism was shared by the professor of astronomy, abbé Tommaso Perelli,<sup>198</sup> a close friend of Attias'.<sup>199</sup>

Attias' empiricist bent and Galilean experimentalism are also revealed in his interest in applied botany and pharmacology.<sup>200</sup> In Livorno Attias was particularly close with the apothecary and botanist Diacinto Cestoni (1637–1718)<sup>201</sup> and with his heir and successor, Marcellino Ittieri (Ictier), who served as physician to the *Deputazione di Sanità* in the port.<sup>202</sup> The name of Cestoni, always invoked with great fondness and affection, recurs in Attias' letters to Muratori more frequently than any other. Cestoni was a fascinating and exuberant figure who made great contributions to early eighteenth-century science. He did so from his provincial location in Livorno, and despite his lack of publications, through his intense correspondence with Antonio Vallisnieri, whom we met at the beginning.<sup>203</sup> Attias' name also recurs in passing in several of Cestoni's letters to Vallisnieri from the period 1705–1707. The correspondence proves the intimacy between Attias and Cestoni, who shared letters and notes from Vallisnieri with his friend. Vallisnieri eventually met Attias during the former's stay in Livorno in September 1705, when he visited Cestoni. After this visit, Attias sent him frequent greetings via Cestoni. Vallisnieri held Attias in high esteem and the two seem to have met again during one of the latter's trips to Venice.<sup>204</sup> Attias wrote at least one letter to Vallisnieri in 1706.<sup>205</sup> It is not known whether the scientist actually received the letter, which Attias entrusted to a cousin living in Venice.<sup>206</sup> Finally, as we saw above, the scholar sent Vallisnieri a gift for his scientific cabinet, which reached Padua in January 1707.<sup>207</sup>

It is safe to assume that it was Cestoni who shaped many of Attias' scientific interests. Through Cestoni, he was in turn influenced by the thorough empirism that had characterized the work of Francesco Redi in the second half of the seventeenth century. Redi (1626–1697) was one of the first Italian scientists to apply the empirical method

- Giovacchino Moücke, stampatore a Firenze, tra Medici e Lorena, ed i suoi rapporti con il dottor Antonio Cocchi,” in A. Contini and M. G. Parri, eds., *Il Granducato di Toscana e i Lorena nel secolo XVIII* (Florence, 1999), 455–576. Attias owned several works by Cocchi: item 663 Xenophontis Ephaesii de Amoribus Antiae, and Abrocomi Graeco-Lat. per Antonio Cocchi. Londini 1726; item 898 Antonii Cocchi Epistolae Medicae. Romae 1725; item 902 Antonii Cocchi de usu Artis Anatomicae. Flor. 1736.
- <sup>190</sup> Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 7, p. 312; letter 24, p. 328. On Gaspare Cerati, see N. Carranza, “Monsignor Gaspare Cerati, provveditore dell’Università di Pisa (1733–1769),” *Bollettino Storico Pisano* 30 (1961): 103–290. Carranza also provides a list of eminent Pisan professors in the first decades of the eighteenth century (ibid., 110–113). Carranza writes of Cerati that “[he] belonged to the group of Catholic reformers who were anti-Jesuit and philo-Jansenist. They placed much emphasis on culture and philosophy, loved truth and considered history and his rigorous and prejudice-free study as a means to make it triumph” (ibid., 93).
- <sup>191</sup> Antonio Fabroni, *Historiae Academiae Pisanae* (Pisa, 1795), 3: 262. Gualtieri’s brother Niccolò was a professor at the university and specialist in botany, zoology, and geology. In his letter to Muratori of Sept. 17, 1725, Attias mentions that Niccolò Gualtieri had just published a work against Antonio Vallisnieri’s *Lezione accademica intorno all’origine delle fontane* (1715), which he nonetheless owned: item 986 Niccolò Gualtieri l’Origine delle Fontane. Lucca 1725.
- <sup>192</sup> Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 2, p. 307. Attias does not mention his name and I have not been able to identify him.
- <sup>193</sup> Ibid., letter 7, p. 313. Averani grafted new tendencies, such as jusnaturalism and pre-Montesquieu contractualism, onto the trunk of Tuscan judicial traditions and Roman law; see Verga, “La cultura del Settecento,” 6. Attias owned a book by Averani: item 273 Josephi Averani Interpretationum Juris. Lug. bat. 1716. Tomi 2.
- <sup>194</sup> Giovanni Lami, in his *Memorie per servire alla vita del padre abate Guido Grandi*, affirms that Giannetti was reinstated in his chair by Gian Gastone after Jesuitical machinations had cost him his position. See Verga, “La cultura del Settecento,” 127.
- <sup>195</sup> Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 6, p. 312; letter 23, p. 326. Attias’ catalogue lists three books by Grandi: item 843 Guidonis Grandi Demonstratio

to biology. Through his experiments with rotten meat and maggots, published in 1668, he convincingly demonstrated that life did not arise spontaneously from decaying matter, thus inflicting a blow to the Aristotelian theory of spontaneous generation. In the spring of 1680, during a sojourn in Livorno, Redi befriended Cestoni and started a fruitful intellectual exchange that lasted until his death. Although it is not clear whether Attias ever met Redi personally,<sup>208</sup> we may speculate that the close friendship and lively intellectual exchanges between Redi and Cestoni, as their letters and recollections prove, influenced him. As Attias himself put it, “whenever we had a chance, we would amuse ourselves by examining a few natural items with Cestoni and others from the school of most illustrious sig. Francesco Redi.”<sup>209</sup>

### Attias’ Experiments

Attias carried out his own experiments in botany and pharmacology. He discussed them with Muratori when the latter asked him quinine (*chinachina*, in eighteenth-century Italian), a drug used against tertian fever or malaria. Before his death in 1718, Cestoni had supplied Muratori with the bark of the Andean tree from which quinine was extracted, so that the drug could be distributed free of charge to the poor of Modena. After exhausting his own supply of quinine, Muratori turned to Attias to buy an additional fifty pounds. Although most of the letters exchanged in 1729 and 1730 contain technical details about purchasing good bark at a fair price, more than once Attias remarked that he had acquired some first-hand knowledge about the drug through his friendship with Cestoni: “I am knowledgeable about *chinachina* and other rarer drugs, because we gained some training at sig. Cestoni’s,” Attias wrote on August 1, 1729.<sup>210</sup> Because one of Muratori’s main concerns was to acquire as much effective drug as possible, he must have asked Attias whether larger chunks of bark possessed stronger curative powers than

- Geometrica Vivianeorum problematum. Flor. 1699; item 744 [*sic*; should be 844] Guidonis Grandi Flores Geometrici. Flor. 1728; item 979 Guido Grandi Compendio delle Sessioni Coniche. Fir. 1722.
- 196 Ferrone, *Intellectual Roots*, 9–10.
- 197 Ibid., 49–55.
- 198 Perelli was to become a member of the Masonic lodge in Florence in the 1740s. See N. Hans, “The Masonic Lodge in Florence in the Eighteenth Century,” *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum: being the transactions of the Lodge Quatuor Coronati* 71 (1958): 109–112.
- 199 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 6, p. 312; letter 23, p. 326.
- 200 Attias’ library catalogue lists numerous works on applied medicine and natural remedies: item 796 Petri Antonii Michaelis Nova plantarum genera juxta Methodum Tournesortianam disposita, quibus 1900 Plantae recensentur, quarum 1400 nondum observatae. Tomi 2 quorum secundus fig. continet Tabulis 138 comprehensas; item 802 Guilielmi Pisonis de Medicina Brasiliensi, et Georgii Margravii Histor. rerum naturalium Brasiliae. Lug. Bat. ap. Lud. Elzivir 1648 cum fig.; item 804 Pierre Pomet Hist. Generales des drogues. Paris 1694. fig.; item 893 Cristoforo Acosta Istoria, natura e virtu delle Droghe medicinali. Ven. 1585; item 894 Gio. Mesue Semplici purgativi. Ven. 1621; item 899 Alexandri Alessi Consilia Medica. Patavii 1621; item 906 Rimedj per le Malatie del Corpo Umano. Pad. 1709; item 973 Histoire des Plantes plus usitees dell’Europe, e dell’Amerique. Lyon 1719. Tomi 2. avec fig.; item 1000 Medicina Salernitana, idest conservandae bonae valetudinis praecepta. Genevae 1638; item 1001 De potu Caphè, Chinensium Thè, and Chocolata. Paris 1685; item 1007 Lucae Tozzi Medicina Practica. Bono. 1697; item 1014 Domenico Auda Pratica degli Speciali. Ven. 1696.
- 201 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 1, pp. 305–307; letter 8, p. 314; letter 14, p. 319; letter 15, p. 319; letter 17, p. 320; letter 19, p. 322; letter 20, p. 323. On Cestoni, see the entry by U. Baldini in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 3:298–301
- 202 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 8, p. 314. Ittieri saved Livorno from the 1720 plague that caused great havoc in Marseilles the same year; see

smaller ones. Thus, in a letter dated August 19, 1729, Attias provided Muratori with a short treatise on the properties and virtues of different kinds of bark. The Livornese scholar, displaying equal commercial and scientific know-how, questioned the effectiveness of larger pieces over small ones, given their price difference and the merchants' preferences:

The *chinachina* is a bark of a tree that may be from the same genus as the cherry tree. It is not surprising that it is possible to get large pieces from a large trunk, which after being sun-dried curl up and turn into large sticks, while from smaller branches one gets smaller sticks, according to their larger or smaller size. These sticks, whether large or small, are most valued. ... Among the lots [sold by merchants in Livorno] you can see some other large or small pieces mixed in: they are from a denser bark full of wood, they are not rolled up and seem to be of a wild variety, but we do not know for sure. ... These are thought to be effective, although not of first quality; there are also some purely wooden pieces, without bark, that people believe to share the virtues of the sticks, since they come from the same tree. However, I do not believe that they have the same strength, as we can see from the case of the orange tree. True, the trunk, leaves, top, fruit, and flowers of an orange tree share the same smell and qualities, but that very smell varies and changes in each part of the plant. ... Some authors describe two types [of *chinachina* tree], one wild and the other cultivated, but I would not know how to distinguish them, since the plants do not grow here. Some other small pieces of similar wood are mixed in the lots. They may be told apart based on their color, or fibers, or taste: sig. Cestoni was particularly adept at sorting out and distinguishing spurious pieces. ... Although I do not believe that larger pieces have stronger properties, merchants prefer big pieces because of their beauty, and also because there is no powder and they can be certain of their real quality.<sup>211</sup>

- Morelli Timpanaro, *A Livorno, nel Settecento*, 24.
- 203 Cestoni, *Epistolario ad Antonio Vallisnieri*, 482, 486, 495–96, 500, 502, 504, 514, 517, and 794. In his correspondence with Muratori, Attias called Vallisnieri “molto mio padrone” on one occasion. See di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 6, p. 312. Vallisnieri was acquainted with two other Jewish physicians in Padua, Raffaele Rabeni and Isacco Cantarini, and shared several medical consultations with Cantarini.
- 204 Cestoni, *Epistolario*, letter 253 (1706), p. 495.
- 205 Ibid., letter 255, p. 496.
- 206 Ibid., letter 259, p. 500.
- 207 Ibid., letter 278, p. 514.
- 208 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 23, p. 327.
- 209 Ibid., letter 17, p. 320: “... col Cestoni ed altri della scuola dell’illustrissimo sig. Francesco Redi ci trastullavamo nell’esame di alcune cose naturali, quando ci si presentava l’occasione.” Attias owned several works by Redi: item 607 Francesco Redi Aretino, *Sonetti*. Fir. nella Stamp. di S.A.R. 1702 Fol.; item 733 Francesco Redi Bacco in Toscana Napoli 1687; item 865 [5 works] Francesco Redi Esperienze intorno alle Vipere Fir. 1686, F. Redi Esper. Intorno a diverse cose Nat. Fir. 1686, F. Redi Osservazioni degl’Animali viventi negl’Animali viventi. 1686, F. Redi Osservazioni intorno a’ Pellicelli del Corpo Umano. 1687, F. Redi Osservazioni sopra la Generazione degl’Insetti. 1688; item 983 Francesco Redi Opera sopra diverse Cose Naturali. Nap. 1687. Tomi 3.
- 210 Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 15, p. 319.
- 211 Ibid., letter 17, pp. 320–21: “... la chinachina essendo scorza di un albero che potrebbe porsi sotto il genere dei gilieggi, non è meraviglia che dal tronco o fusto grosso se ne possono scortecciare pezzi grossi, i quali seccandosi si accartocciano e divengono cannelli grossi, siccome da’ rami più sottili se ne scortecciano altri cannelli minori, secondo la maggiore o minor grossezza. Questi cannelli, siano maggiori o minori, sono i più stimati. ... Vedonsi però nelle dette partite, mescolati altri pezzi o grossi o piccolo di scorza più densa e piena di legno, che però questi non s’accartocciano e pare siano di pianta silvestre, ma non lo sappiamo bene; questi si stimano ancora buoni ma non del primo ordine; seguono i pezzi puramente legnosi senza corteccia,

Attias laid out his arguments in a logical progression: he started with external observations, moved to more complex botanical comparisons partly based on his reading, and concluded with his own experiments, which corroborated his initial examination. The letter thus sheds light on Attias' own empirical method, which he had to put to the test in the summer of 1727, during a vacation in the insalubrious Livornese countryside:

I experimented in this land of ours, which has been very infected (particularly in 1684, with pestilential fevers). Approximately two years ago, while I was vacationing in the countryside ("piano") near the coast, I became ill with a terrible tertian fever in August. I conducted some tests on my own person and the prudent physician let me do as I pleased. I recovered very quickly, together with the other vacationers who had caught the *maremmana* fever and trusted me, without any need for bloodletting or other procedures. I used indiscriminately large pieces for some of us and small pieces for others, and did the same operation with all of them. I had the bark ground up and sifted until it was reduced to a very fine powder, which was steeped in lukewarm water, white wine, or coffee. As the fever attacks repeated themselves, I increased the doses and made the intake more frequent, morning, day and evening, until the fever disappeared, without leaving any indisposition. Therefore, I believe [the bark] does not lose much strength over time, but I do not doubt that the fresher quality will be preferable.<sup>212</sup>

When it came to pharmacological experiments, therefore, Attias first tried them out on his own person. After testing his intuition about *chinachina*, he extended the treatment to other sick vacationers who trusted him. In addition, through an equal and impartial use of thick and thin pieces of bark, which demonstrated that they possessed exactly the same curative properties, Attias was able to prove that the merchants' preference for large rolls of bark was due to their "aesthetic" appeal,

rather than their greater efficacy, as he stated earlier in the letter. Given the gravity of the fever and the seriousness of the symptoms, the fact that Attias' physician let him conduct this experiment is an indication of his trust in his patient's pharmacological knowledge.

che per essere dell'istessa pianta si stimano dell'istessa virtù. Io per me credo che non operino con tanto vigore, per la ragione che, essendo vero che il tronco, le foglie, le vette, il frutto e il fiore dell'arancio abbino odore e virtù omogenea, l'istessissimo odore è variato e si distingue in ogni parte della pianta. ... Alcuni autori descrivono due qualità, una silvestre e l'altra coltivata, ma non avendo noi qui le piante non so come poterle distinguere; è ben vero che ci mescolano nelle partite altri pezzuoli di legno simile, che si distingue dal colore e dalle fibre o dal sapore; e questa era la perizia del sig. Cestoni per distinguere l'espuria. ... Abbenché io non creda che l'essere di maggior grandezza possi accrescerli la virtù, i mercanti preferiscono i pezzi grossi per la bellezza, e perché non vi è della polvere e perché s'assicurano della vera qualità. ..."

- 212 Ibid., letter 17, p. 321: "Io ne ho fatto la sperienza in questo nostro paese, che è stato molto infettato (particolarmente nel anno 1684 da febbri pestilenziali), e sarà circa due anni che essendo io andato a villeggiare in questo piano prossimo alla marina, presi una accrissima terzana nel mese di agosto, ed ho fatto varie sperienze sulla mia persona, e il medico prudente mi lasciava fare, ed io e gli altri villeggianti che avevano preso la maremmana e mi credevono, son guariti in brevissimo tempo senza missione di sangue né altri preparativi; mi servivo indifferentemente della grossa per alcuni della sutile per altri, e faceva l'istessa operazione. Si faceva pestare e stacciare finché si riduceva in minutissima ed impercettibile polvere, e si dava infusa in acqua tiepida in vin bianco o nel caffè, ma a mano a mano che la febre replicava si frequentavano le prese ed accrescevano le dosi, mattina, giorno e sera, finché andava via, senza lasciar alcuna indisposizione. Credo però che perda poco col tempo, ma non dubbito che sarà preferibile la più fresca."



## Attias' Ideas and "Epicureanism"

Before Attias' library catalogue resurfaced, modern scholars speculated about his Masonic sympathies.<sup>213</sup> We can evaluate the perception of Attias as a scholar with atheistic leanings by looking at his letters to Muratori and at the catalogue. In physics, Attias' atomist and Epicurean sympathies are suggested by the repeated mention of the translation of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* by Alessandro Marchetti, a seventeenth-century professor at the University of Pisa.<sup>214</sup> Attias owned a copy of the book.<sup>215</sup> This edition had a long and unfortunate history and was at the center of a harsh debate that rocked the university in the last decades of the seventeenth century, before it was finally published (posthumously) in Naples in 1717 by the clandestine printing shop of Lorenzo Ciccarelli.<sup>216</sup> A passing comment provides a further clue to Attias' atomist leanings. He sounded quite surprised to hear that Muratori was not familiar with "the famous book by Cudworth titled *The True Intellectual System of the Universe, the first part, wherein all the reason and philosophy of atheism is confuted and its impossibility demonstrated*, by R. Cudworth etc., a man of vast erudition, and full of good morals, piety, and religion."<sup>217</sup> This ponderous tome of 900 folio sheets, which elicited much controversy after its publication, contained a confutation of atheism couched as a discourse in favor of human freedom and against determinism and religious fatalism.<sup>218</sup> Ralph Cudworth (1617–1688), one of the Cambridge Platonists, imputed atheism to a distortion of the original atomistic theories, which he believed to have been invented by a Sidonian thinker called Moschus, who he asserted was identical with the biblical Moses. Although atomism had been misused as an argument in favor of atheism, Cudworth considered it perfectly tenable as an explanation of the physical world. In a subsequent letter, Attias mentioned Cudworth again, stating that he did not understand Antonio Cocchi's lack of appreciation for the Englishman's theories.<sup>219</sup>

Attias' praise of Cudworth appears to indicate his leanings toward

a moderate attempt to reconcile modern scientific outlook with traditional religion. Yet, as often happened with refutations of atheism, the boundaries between reservations and insinuations, attacks and apologetics, were a matter of interpretation. Early modern readers oscillated between opprobrium and delight at an author's refined account of his adversaries' atheistic theses, when they did not sincerely believe in his piety and orthodoxy. The Florentine scientist and diplomat Lorenzo Magalotti (1637–1712) is another case in point. His *Lettere familiari contro l'ateismo*, with which Attias was also acquainted, provided readers with lengthy quotes from Hobbes, Spinoza, Bayle, and Thomas Burnet. The work has been called “a locus in which much doubt, curiosity, and broadmindedness were cautiously and mystifyingly collected.”<sup>220</sup> Similarly, the English Cudworth,

- <sup>213</sup> Gencarelli, “Athias,” 526; Wyrwa, *Juden in der Toskana und in Preußen im Vergleich*, 67.
- <sup>214</sup> Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 4, p. 309. We have already encountered a reference to some of the protagonists of early modern skepticism, Sextus Empiricus and Pierre Bayle, in conjunction with the Geneva bookseller Bousquet. See above, n. 151. On Marchetti and Epicureanism in Tuscany, see M. Saccenti, *Lucrezio in Toscana. Studio su Alessandro Marchetti* (Florence, 1966).
- <sup>215</sup> Item 731 Lucrezio trad. in Verso sciolto Toscano da Alessandro Marchetti. Londra 1717.
- <sup>216</sup> Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 6, p. 311; letter 10, p. 316. Attias attributes the publication to Paolo Antonio Rolli. The work was published with the false imprint of London (Ferrone, *Intellectual Roots*, 186–87).
- <sup>217</sup> Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 10, p. 316.
- <sup>218</sup> The book was prohibited and placed on the Index on Apr. 13, 1739.
- <sup>219</sup> Di Campli and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 12, p. 317.
- <sup>220</sup> Diaz, *Il Granducato di Toscana*, 507–508. Magalotti cautiously retreated into a convent in 1690, during a particularly harsh wave of Inquisitorial persecutions against

together with Hobbes, Bayle, and Spinoza, was a staple of the “libertine bookshelf.” Although the presence in Attias’ library of books deemed dangerous by the ecclesiastical authorities is clearly not sufficient to suggest heretical or freethinking propensities, we may at least gauge the extent of his curiosity. He owned a collection of refutations of Spinoza’s system, published in Brussels in 1731, which not only provided readers with polemical material against the Dutch philosopher, but also gave access to his ideas;<sup>221</sup> Pierre Bayle’s *Dictionnaire* (Rotterdam, 1697), one of the most controversial works of the early modern period;<sup>222</sup> and many works by Gassendi, the principal expounder of atomist philosophy in the seventeenth century.<sup>223</sup> Attias’ letters additionally show that he was familiar with Hobbes and Locke. He alluded to Hobbes’ noted remark on the sorry and brutal state of human nature in a particularly effusive and melancholy letter to Muratori.<sup>224</sup> As for Locke, Muratori explicitly asked Attias whether he owned anything by the famous English philosopher. Attias replied that he had loaned his French translation of Locke’s *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690) to Count Verri. He could request its return if Muratori were interested; but he had the French translation of *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) immediately to hand.<sup>225</sup>

Finally, as his friend the Livornese bookseller Giuseppe Arnaldo Mornini stated, Attias followed “a certain philosophical way” to keep himself in good physical shape.<sup>226</sup> A later note by Giovanni Gentili, who treated Attias in his old age, sheds some light on this issue.<sup>227</sup> Gentili, who succeeded Marcellino Ittieri (Ictier) at the *Deputazione di Sanità* of Livorno in 1737, penned a brief medical memorandum on Attias’ last illness and death in his nine volumes of medical *consilia*.<sup>228</sup> There the Livornese physician described his subject as “doctor Attias, famous Jewish Livornese, man of letters and musical dilettante, leading an epicurean life.”<sup>229</sup> The “certain philosophical way” referred to by Mornini was probably Epicureanism, complementing temperate and pragmatic morals.

- “atheists,” and stayed there for a few months while waiting for the situation to quiet down. Attias owned the 1721 Florence edition of the letters, composed between 1683 and 1684 and published for the first time in Venice, 1717, after Magalotti’s death; item 862 Lorenzo Magalotti *Lettere scientifiche, e familiari*. Fir. 1721. Tomi 2.
- 221 Item 88 Fenelon *Refutation de Benoit Spinosa*. Bruxelles 1731. This edition included other refutations as well.
- 222 Item 314 Pierre Bayle *Dictionarie [sic] Historique et Critique*. Rotterdam chez Reiner Leers 1697. Tomi 4. Et le supplement a Geneve 1722. Tomi 1. Tomi 5. Bayle’s *Dictionnaire* was prohibited and placed on the Index on Dec. 22, 1700 (and again on May 12, 1703).
- 223 Item 770 Epicuri *Philosophia per Petrum Gassendum*. Lug. 1675; item 1038 *Abregè de la philosophie de Gassendi*. Tom. 2. 3. 4. 6. 7. Tomi 5. See also R. Popkin, *History of Skepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley, 1979), 129–50.
- 224 Di Campi and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 11, p. 317. Attias’ catalogue does not list *Leviathan*, but he owned a copy of *De Cive*, item 161. Th. Hobbes de Cive. Amst. ap. Danielel Elzevir 1669.
- 225 *Ibid.*, letter 13, p. 318. In the same letter Attias mentioned that he had found a way to order from London the books in which Muratori had expressed an interest. This remark provides further evidence of Attias’ close relations with England, already evidenced by his dealings with Crow and Skinner. Item 128, Lok *L’Education des Enfants traduit par Coste*. Amstardam 1721 [sic]; item 853, Locke *Essay philosophique sur l’entendement humain trad. de l’Anglois par Coste*. Ams. 1700. Locke’s *Essay on Human Understanding* was prohibited by Pope Clemens XII on June 19, 1734.
- 226 Provasi, “Giuseppe Attias Senior,” 293.
- 227 This is the same Gentili who helped prepare Attias’ library catalogue.
- 228 Some of Gentili’s medical observations are reproduced in Pera, *Curiosità livornesi*, 314–316. The Florentine Gentili moved to Livorno, where he lived most of his life, in 1737. Gentili studied medicine at the University of Pisa, where he trained with some of the same scholars with whom Attias was friendly: Pascasio Giannetti, Guido Grandi, and Michelangelo Tilli. See Morelli Timpanaro, *A Livorno nel Settecento*, 23.
- 229 Curiously, Gentili wrote that Attias died in February 1745, when in fact it was the beginning of March 1739; see Pera, *Curiosità livornesi*, 315.

Based on the material reviewed above, it is safe to affirm that Attias had Galilean, most likely atomistic and Epicurean, and possibly skeptical tendencies. But this does not turn him into a Jewish atheist or a heretic, as a romantic reading would have it. Rather, it places him squarely within the cultural elite of his time: Attias frequented circles of moderate, enlightened Roman Catholics who attempted to reconcile religious faith with modern experimental science and opposed dogmatism and reactionary, obscurantist Catholic conformism, to which many contemporaries succumbed.<sup>230</sup> Such an endeavor often took place through a philosophical syncretism in which widely different and conflicting traditions, including Epicurus, Lucretius, Gassendi, Descartes, Galileo, Locke, and Newton, coexisted in a heterogeneous “modern” front opposed to Aristotelianism: Attias’ library holdings, as we saw above, fit perfectly with this cultural agenda.

### **Attias and the Inquisition**

While modern historians may have doubts whether Attias toyed with heretical ideas, the Tuscan Inquisition thought differently. His library elicited some inquisitorial concerns in May 1739, at the time of the arrest of the poet Tommaso Crudeli, unjustly accused of Freemasonry.<sup>231</sup> Already in 1729 Attias was suspected of “spreading heretical doctrines” in Florence. In 1728 the scholar had temporarily relocated to Florence, where he was “thinking about taking an airy and appropriate house to transfer the library which he [had] in Livorno,” according to the Florentine librarian Anton Francesco Marmi.<sup>232</sup> Attias had rented a house in Florence, Marmi confirmed, “but since it was too little to arrange his library and his good furniture in it, he undertook some negotiations to rent a larger one.”<sup>233</sup> The plan never came to fruition. At the end of July 1729, Attias left Florence suddenly, during the night, apparently without giving any notice to his friends, and moved back

to Livorno. His hasty return to the provinces is a matter for some speculation. Marmi informed Muratori that sinister rumors about Attias' fate had circulated for weeks after his disappearance from the capital: "People commonly said that this Inquisitor had him arrested at night time and taken to [the Inquisition's] prisons, and we believed this to be true for no little time." After writing to some acquaintances in Livorno, Marmi continued, "we learned that this was not accurate, since Attias was there. Only, this government let him understand that he should go back to Livorno and not think about making his home here, as Attias himself confessed to some of my Livornese friends."<sup>234</sup>

Why did Attias leave Florence? While it is still unclear whether he was in fact banned from the capital, or if he moved back to Livorno and out of the reach of the Inquisition in order to avoid a possible

<sup>230</sup> Ferrone, *Intellectual Roots*, 60–62.

<sup>231</sup> On the Crudeli affair, see A. Zobi, *Storia civile della Toscana dal 1737 al 1848* (Florence, 1850), 195–205; Sbigoli, *Tommaso Crudeli*; P. Casini, "The Crudeli Affair: Inquisition and Reason of State," in P. Gay, ed., *Eighteenth Century Studies presented to Arthur M. Wilson* (Hanover, NH, 1972), 133–52. Attias died in March 1739, but the news evidently had not reached the Inquisition yet. For the evidence concerning Attias' library, see: Zobi, *Storia civile*, 201–202; Maria Augusta Morelli Timpanaro, *Tommaso Crudeli, Poppi 1702–1745. Contributo per uno studio sulla inquisizione a Firenze nella prima metà del XVIII secolo* (Florence, 2003), 1: 202, 209. Although the papal bull *In eminenti* (1738) associated Freemasonry with obscene rituals and heresy, Tuscan Freemasonry "worked rather as a filter through which English travelers or residents and the Lorrainer ruling class would select their friends and clients" (Casini, "The Crudeli Affair," 139).

<sup>232</sup> Viola, *Carteggi con Mansi... Marmi*, letter 283, p. 449: Anton Francesco Marmi to Muratori, July 9, 1729.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, letter 289, p. 453.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

investigation, it is now possible to reconstruct the episode more clearly. Gustavo Costa, in a seminal article, argued that the cause of Attias' departure was "an illiberal policy that did not tolerate in Florence the privileges allowed to the Jewish minority in the commercial *entrepôt* of Livorno."<sup>235</sup> Recently published inquisitorial and governmental documents lead us in a different direction, however. The episode should rather be seen as an offshoot of the tense relations between State and Church in the last uncertain years of Medici rule. If throughout most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Tuscany had loyally acquiesced to the decisions of local ecclesiastical tribunals and the Roman Inquisition, slight signs of change appeared around 1690. Political and diplomatic tensions between the Tuscan state and the Papacy, which increased in the course of the eighteenth century, were reflected in the unsolved conflict between inquisitorial and civil powers in Tuscany.<sup>236</sup> The last Medici grand duke, the heirless Gian Gastone, initiated a tentative program of ecclesiastical reforms. Although Gian Gastone's policies did not meet with great success, they prepared the way for the more radical transformations championed by the House of Lorraine from 1737 on.<sup>237</sup>

Attias indeed left the capital because of matters related to an accusation of heresy made against him at the time by Father Vincenzo Conti of Bergamo, Inquisitor of Florence. At the beginning of the Crudeli affair in May 1739, Cardinal Ruffo of the Holy Office suggested in a letter to Conti's successor, Father Paolo Antonio Ambrogio, that Attias had been "evicted from Florence under suspicion of heresy" ten years earlier.<sup>238</sup> Ambrogio confirmed that Attias "had been exiled from this city as somebody who spread false doctrines."<sup>239</sup> Instead of blaming a governmental "illiberal policy," I would emphasize the fact that Attias was not arrested by the Tuscan Inquisition and was never interrogated about his alleged "heretical views." We may tentatively suggest that Attias' privileged relationship with the secular authorities and the grand duke allowed him to escape a dangerous situation and

seek shelter in the port city. Despite his sudden departure, Attias left Florence unscathed and was able to return to the safety of Livorno, where thanks to the *Livornina* system the Inquisition was traditionally less powerful than in the capital.<sup>240</sup>

We are not surprised to learn that Attias himself held the Inquisition, and particularly its Iberian branch, in little regard and was strongly critical of its persecution of New Christians. During his time in Florence the Livornese scholar met an illustrious representative of the early French Enlightenment, the jurist and political thinker Montesquieu, later author of *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), who visited Florence in 1728. Although we do not know whether the two men ever discussed legal matters together, based on evidence from Montesquieu's works it is safe to assume that they conversed about a number of subjects, including the Catholic Inquisition. In his *Voyages* Montesquieu remarked about the encounter with "le Juif Dathias,

<sup>235</sup> G. Costa, "Montesquieu, il germanesimo e la cultura italiana dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo," in A. Postigliola, ed., *Storia e ragione. Le Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence di Montesquieu del 250° della pubblicazione. Atti del Convegno internazionale organizzato dall'Istituto Universitario Orientale e dalla Società italiana di studi sul secolo XVIII* (Naples, 1985), 86. As far as I know, no other historian has studied the 1729 episode.

<sup>236</sup> R. Canosa, *Storia dell'Inquisizione in Italia, dalla metà del Cinquecento alla fine del Settecento. Milano e Firenze*, vol. 4 (Rome, 1988), 165–78.

<sup>237</sup> Diaz, *Il Granducato di Toscana*, 524–45.

<sup>238</sup> Morelli Timpanaro, *Tommaso Crudeli*, 202. On Ambrogio see E. Gencarelli, "Ambrogio, Paolo Antonio," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 2:689ff. The letter is dated May 9, 1739, the day that Tommaso Crudeli was arrested.

<sup>239</sup> Morelli Timpanaro, *Tommaso Crudeli*, 201–209.

<sup>240</sup> The *Livornina* of 1591–1593 granted Jews and *conversos* relative protection from the Inquisition.



qui est de Livourne, mais étoit venu à Florence, et est homme de lettres.”<sup>241</sup> He also observed in his *Spicilège* how Attias told him that “the Portuguese are Catholic like the Jesuits; that is, they do what they want, because they say they are even more Catholic than the Pope and all the Roman court.” This was why, according to Attias, the self-righteous Portuguese received papal bulls with apparent respect but never complied with them, as they believed themselves to be beyond reproach. The abuses perpetrated by the Iberian Inquisition, which Rome was unable to curb, were a case in point. Attias’ portrayal of the Portuguese, as reported by Montesquieu, was harsh. He depicted them as ignorant, arrogant, and overzealous, remarking how “it might well happen that the Portuguese will abandon the Roman religion, or will only keep it nominally, to fall into some folly dictated by their strangeness.”<sup>242</sup> Attias’ criticism of the Inquisition also resulted in a very negative assessment of its role in Brazil. The Jewish scholar, Montesquieu reported, blamed the decline in the sugar trade not only on the discovery of gold mines, but also on the Inquisition’s persecution of the New Christians, which impoverished their plantations and drove them to safer harbors, such as Surinam.<sup>243</sup> The two men had a chance to discuss Livorno and its Jews as well, for instance in relation to the coral industry that made the port famous in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>244</sup> Attias, whom Montesquieu referred to as “le principal Juif de Livourne,” told him that his hometown numbered 35,000 inhabitants, of whom about 5,000 were Jews. Attias knew the number well, as he had access to the roster for the distribution of Passover *matsot* and thus to the list of all the Jewish families in town.<sup>245</sup>

Based on the evidence about Attias’ nocturnal escape from Florence in July 1729, it seems that he was an involuntary protagonist of the ongoing jurisdictional conflict between State and Church in Tuscany. Jewish policy was often the locus where tensions between the competing secular and ecclesiastical powers converged during

the slow and difficult process of modernization and secularization in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Italy.<sup>246</sup> We can interpret the failed inquisitorial attempt to investigate Attias' library ten years later along similar lines.<sup>247</sup> As mentioned above, the Holy Office sought access to Attias' library in May 1739, alerted by a note sent by the Inquisitor of Pisa concerning Attias' "beautiful and [carefully] selected library." The Inquisitor suspected that some Livornese professors at the University of Pisa visited the library and on occasion even brought along some of their students, "to see the rarity of the editions preserved therein."<sup>248</sup> An epistolary exchange between the Inquisitor of Florence and the secretary of state, Giovanni Antonio Tornaquinci, ensued. At the recommendation of Count Emmanuel de Richécourt, a close collaborator of the new grand duke of Tuscany, Francis Stephen of Lorraine (ruled 1737–1765), Tornaquinci thought it preferable to deny permission for the inquiry to proceed. In a memorandum to the grand duke, Tornaquinci cited the regime of liberty that characterized

<sup>241</sup> Montesquieu, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2 (*Voyages*), ed. M. A. Masson (Paris, 1950), 1091. See also Costa, "Montesquieu, il germanesimo e la cultura italiana dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo," 86; Rotta, "Montesquieu nel settecento italiano," 80–82.

<sup>242</sup> Montesquieu, *Œuvres complètes*, 2: 816 (*Le Spicilège*).

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 817.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 1087 (*Voyages*).

<sup>246</sup> See, for instance, the illuminating study on eighteenth-century Turin: L. Allegra, *Identità in bilico. Il ghetto ebraico di Torino nel Settecento* (Turin, 1996).

<sup>247</sup> For the history of the conflict between State and Church in eighteenth-century Tuscany, see N. Rodolico, *Stato e chiesa in Toscana durante la reggenza lorenese (1737–1765)* (Florence, 1910); Canosa, *Storia dell'inquisizione*, 179–99.

<sup>248</sup> Morelli Timpanaro, *Tommaso Crudeli*, 202.

Livorno and made it into a prosperous commercial center as the main reason for protecting Attias' library from the Inquisition: "The Father Inquisitor would have ... liked for me to authorize the search of a house owned by the Jew Attias in Livorno, where reportedly there are wicked books. But Sig. Count Richecourt pondered that this would be contrary to the freedom and privileges [granted to its citizens] and would ruin the commerce of that port (and this would favor the priests of Rome, as they aim to increase the commerce of Ancona and diminish that of Livorno). I replied to the Father Inquisitor that [the search] could not be authorized because of the different law in effect in Livorno. He did not push his request any further."<sup>249</sup> In connection with the Crudeli affair and the threatened Attias investigation, the secretary of state for ecclesiastical affairs, Giulio Rucellai, agreed about the necessity to prevent ecclesiastical interference in Livorno, for utilitarian reasons. In Rucellai's crisp words, "it is well-known that all would be lost, not only if we let the Inquisitor act freely, as he has always desired, but also if we believed these rumors. It is enough to be persuaded of this [if you reflect] that Livorno was only a swamp, while thanks to the security promised and granted in the privileges of the Free Port it has become in less than a century one of the most important cities in Italy and the only source of income for the State."<sup>250</sup>

Emmanuel de Richecourt exerted crucial influence on the new grand duke's ecclesiastical policy. His desire to curb local inquisitorial power went hand in hand with his wish to weaken the influence of the "priests of Rome," as Tornaquinci's letter suggests. When Tuscany passed to the House of Lorraine in 1737, a period of sweeping reforms in the bureaucracy and machinery of the state began, which included growing opposition to Tuscany's traditional submission to papal policy. One of the main fields of controversy was the autonomy of the Inquisition within the state, which the new ruler proceeded to weaken and eventually dismantle. By an edict issued in January 1738, the government curtailed the privileges enjoyed *de facto* by inquisitorial

delators (*familiari*). Moreover, inquisitors were denied recourse to the secular arm to apprehend the accused and the government asserted its exclusive right to supervise criminal trials.<sup>251</sup> In June 1738, the Tuscan government refused to allow the publication of the papal bull *In eminenti*, in which Clemens XII fulminated against Freemasonry. Again and again, Richecourt and his ministers extended protection to booksellers and facilitated the importation of foreign, “wicked books.” An additional blow was dealt in December 1738, when the confiscation of a suspect books from the shop of the Florentine bookseller Rigacci (who, alongside works by Pufendorf and Vitruvius, sold more immediately controversial anti-Jesuit satires) ended with the return of the books to him and the banishment or imprisonment of the delators who had accused him.<sup>252</sup> With the prestige of the Inquisition beginning to dwindle, the Crudeli affair has been viewed as its last attempt to rescue the tribunal’s status with a noisy case against a well-known man of letter with the reputation, if not the intellectual status, of a freethinker.<sup>253</sup> In this increasingly heated and divided context, Joseph Attias was left unharmed once again, thanks to his privileged position as a Livornese Jew, protected by the *Livornina* and “the different law in effect in Livorno.”<sup>254</sup>

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>250</sup> Letter from Rucellai to Richecourt, Aug. 11, 1739; quoted in Sbigoli, *Tommaso Crudeli*, pp. xxv–xxxviii.

<sup>251</sup> Rodolico, *Stato e chiesa*, 155; Casini, “The Crudeli Affair,” 135.

<sup>252</sup> Rodolico, *Stato e chiesa*, 165–68.

<sup>253</sup> Ironically, its disastrous outcome was to bring about the demise of the tribunal itself. The Tuscan Inquisition was eventually suppressed by Grand Duke Peter Leopold in 1782. See Casini, “The Crudeli Affair,” 149–52.

<sup>254</sup> Of course, Attias himself was no longer alive in May 1739, but his library was spared.

## Conclusion

It is legitimate to ask what significance Attias has for the general picture of early modern Jewish culture. Compared to the classic rabbinic-medical type, as known from the studies by Benayahu, Bonfil, and Ruderman, Attias seems to have played a unique social role. Unlike the rabbi-cum-physician of the Ghetto age, he was a pure scholar and did not depend on a salary from the community or a patron.<sup>255</sup> A wealthy member of the Livornese oligarchy, he embraced political activity for the *Nazione Ebraica* in the Government of the Sixty, as well as the learning of the wider world. Although there is hardly any evidence that Attias had more than a passing involvement with the religious life of the Livornese congregation, the minutes of the Livornese Government reveal that his political and legal contribution to the administration of the community was substantial. Based on his library holdings and correspondence, Attias' approach to Hebrew and "the antiquities of the Jews" was influenced by a critical and philological spirit that turned him into a Jewish "Orientalist," an antiquarian in search of truth, whose religious affiliation, be it Catholic or Jewish, should not hinder the pursuit of *buon gusto*. Despite early statements to the contrary by Giovanni Gualberto de Soria, my investigation of Attias' social network and interests shows that he was deeply familiar with the latest tendencies in experimental science, paid distinct attention to English scientific culture, and associated himself with the group of the *novatori* at the University of Pisa, in particular Averani, Cerati, Giannetti, Grandi, Perelli, and Tilli. Attias displayed his empirical bent by conducting experiments in botany and pharmacology. He expressed sympathy for atomistic ideas on more than one occasion. His Epicurean leanings extended to a temperate health regimen and diet.

His case suggests the progressive emergence of distinct and disconnected spheres of interests and activity for members of the Sephardi Jewish elite. Ostensibly, Attias did not find these two realms, the Jewish and the non-Jewish, the religious and the scientific, irreconcilable or

incompatible. In fact, he kept them clearly distinct.<sup>256</sup> Attias' ability to move between two coexisting yet separate spheres, one defined by his Jewish identity within the *Nazione Ebraica*, the other pertaining to his scholarly and scientific pursuits outside of it, underscores his status as a model of a new type of Jewish scholar.<sup>257</sup> His case shares similarities with that of the early Prussian *maskil* Aaron Gumpertz (1723–1769), one of the few Jews who received a German education during his time, who also maintained social relations and correspondence with non-Jewish intellectuals.<sup>258</sup> According to his biographer, Gumpertz was aware that his participation in the Jewish and German milieus would not be welcomed by most members of both. Gumpertz's only Hebrew publication did not refer to his involvement in German cultural life, while his German works, addressed to a non-Jewish readership, made no reference to his Jewish identity; thus "Gumpertz's intervention in his two worlds, the Jewish and the German, were clearly sealed off from one another,"<sup>259</sup> a trait that reminds us of Attias' separate pursuits.

<sup>255</sup> M. Benayahu, "R. Abram ha-Kohen mi-Zante u-lahaqat ha-rofe'im ha-mešorerim be-Padova," *Ha-sifrut* 7/26 (1978): 108–40; R. Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford and London, 1990); Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery*, esp. 100–17.

<sup>256</sup> It goes without saying that there is nothing particularly Jewish about his scientific inquiry.

<sup>257</sup> While there is no reason to believe that his adherence to traditional Judaism was in any way weakened by his cultural proclivities, there is also no indication that anybody in the Livornese Jewish establishment disapproved of his intellectual investigations.

<sup>258</sup> G. Freudenthal "Aaron Salomon Gumpertz, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, and the First Call for an Improvement of the Civil Rights of Jews in Germany (1753)," *AJS Review* 29:2 (2005): 299–353; D. Sorkin "The Early Haskalah," in S. Feiner and D. Sorkin, eds., *New Perspective on the Haskalah* (London, 2001), 9–26.

<sup>259</sup> Freudenthal, "Aaron Salomon Gumpertz," 332–33.

Attias can also be fruitfully compared to another younger contemporary, the Anglo-Jewish natural historian and conchologist Emanuel Mendes da Costa (1717–91).<sup>260</sup> While most of da Costa's letters dealt with fossils and other scientific subjects, he was considered a kind of "specialist on Jewish affairs" by his fellow members of the Royal Society. Apparently da Costa's non-Jewish correspondents could never ignore his Jewish identity.<sup>261</sup> Attias' case is somewhat different. His conversations with his non-Jewish colleagues always focused on general scholarship and science, never on theological or polemical matters. In fact, as we saw, Attias did not dwell on, defend, or broadcast his Judaism. Yet the Judaism that to him was to be detached from, and perhaps only secondary to, his scholarly persona, could remain a matter of curiosity, wonder, and exceptionality to others. Attias deeply resented being dragged into religious disputes. In 1733, he wrote Muratori: "Although I have always disliked meddling in theological matters, and especially in polemics, I have been very upset by the impertinence of some people who immediately want to talk about religion: if you answer courteously, avoiding conflict, you are called apathetic (and on such an important matter!); if you joke, you are an unbeliever; if you object, then you are stubborn and obstinate: so, I try to abstain from it whenever I can."<sup>262</sup> Indeed, an apologetic or polemical tone never appears in Attias' letters.<sup>263</sup> Politesse and social courtesy, key mottos of the Republic of Letters, fostered a kind of enlightened silence. A civilized avoidance of matters religious had become the best defense against the danger of anti-Jewish sentiments.

## Appendix 1

Attias about himself, December 22, 1724<sup>264</sup>

What information can I give you of my poor studies, which have been vague, irregular, and interrupted? True, since I was a very young child I had the greatest desire to learn. Yet, I was never able to retain even the terms of the vain sciences, until I came to know their vanity. My ancestors took refuge in this land from Spain, therefore the language I drank with my mother's milk is Spanish. In my Nation's schools

- <sup>260</sup> Da Costa's 2,487 letters demonstrate his tremendous web of relationships in the scientific world. See D. B. Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key. Anglo-Jewry's Construction of Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), 204–14, and the references therein.
- <sup>261</sup> Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment*, 207–208.
- <sup>262</sup> Di Campi and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 23, p. 326: "... e non ostante che sempre ho havuto ripugnanza d'ingerirmi nelle materie teologiche, particolarmente nelle polemiche, mi son trovato molto inquietato dall'impertinenza di alcuni che subito subito vi entrano nella religione; se si risponde cortesemente fuggendo il contrasto, siete un indolente (in materia così importante); se scherzando miscredente, se obbietando, caparvio e ostinato, che però sempre che posso me ne astengo."
- <sup>263</sup> Attias' case is obviously poles apart from that of seventeenth-century Jewish scholars such as Orobio de Castro or Leone Modena, who actively engaged in polemical or apologetic dialogue with Christians. See, for instance: M. R. Cohen, "Leone da Modena's Riti: A Seventeenth-Century Plea for the Toleration of the Jews," *Jewish Social Studies* 34 (1972): 287–319; P. T. Van Rooden and J. W. Wesselius, "The Early Enlightenment and Judaism: The 'Civil Dispute' between Philippus Van Limborch and Isaac Orobio de Castro," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 21 (1987): 140–53.
- <sup>264</sup> I provide here an English translation of Attias' two autobiographical letters to Muratori, from which I have quoted throughout. For the original Italian, see di Campi and Forlani, *Carteggi con Amenta... Azzi*, letter 2, p. 307; letter 23, pp. 325–26.



I learned, as is the custom, some Hebrew, which I subsequently cultivated together with the other oriental Languages by means of the grammatical methods of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Jews and of the Christian Hebraists. Afterwards, in Florence, I studied Aristotelian philosophy according to the school of sig. dott. Giannetti, and the principles of mathematics with a disciple of sig. Viviani. In this country everyone is busy and immersed in business, so there are no conversations or literary gatherings. I must pass my time as best I can, attracting foreigners encountered by chance in local stores or the shop of sig. Donato Donati, getting them to my place with the excuse of seeing a few books I have been putting together.

I made some journeys through Italy and one in France, where I met the living men of letters. The wicked curiosity to learn new things makes me lazy in my writing. ...

I resolved to abandon commerce, withdrawing from society to live on my modest revenues. To this end I renovated and enlarged the house where I live..."

November 20, 1733

To satisfy your doubt concerning my signature, I have to tell you, in all philosophical frankness, that I was born with a burning desire and the greatest curiosity to know, more as a way to get to comprehend the extent and limits of human knowledge than to practice any profitable profession or get some honorary office by these means.

When I opened my eyes I realized that it would not be possible to go on without the help of languages, both living and dead. Although my father had been a lawyer and soldier in Salamanca (and then became a merchant), I could find at home only eight volumes of Spanish comedies by Lope de Vega, Calderón, Montalbán, Solís, Salazar, and other playwrights of extremely dissolute poetry, who mixed tragedy

and comedy and moreover were not familiar with Greek literature; beside these volumes of comedies, there was a lonely Latin Bible printed in Paris and a small treatise on some astronomical quadrants by Gemafrius.

Until I was 15 I had a teacher of Spanish with whom I studied reading and writing, and a tutor for Hebrew, whom we paid a little more than two *paoli* per month. But the poor fellow was not able to teach it to me, since he did not know it himself to begin with.

At the same time, through my mother's influence, I received velvet clothes with golden tassels, etc.

When I turned 16 I was married off to my little niece, a daughter of an older brother of mine. My old father, who had me with his second wife, hoped with this to leave us [i.e., the two parts of the family] as allies and in peace (what followed is too long to discuss in a letter).

So behold me 18, with a wife at my side; we spent the first money earned from investing the dowry on a diligent Latin teacher and a rabbi, who had perfect mastery of the Hebrew Bible and Hebrew grammar. I stocked up daily on authors of good Latinity, though in very poor editions, because the country was much more backward then; and I also began acquiring some books of Hebrew literature, which I hid away in an airy room outside my house and away from my father's gaze. He used to reproach me, since those few books that I would let him see seemed to him unnecessary and superfluous.

Thus I went on for a while, calling on all the foreigners who passed through. I learned arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy from somebody called Piselli, a good engineer who died in the siege of Gaeta; and I would sometimes travel to Florence, where I learned Aristotelian philosophy with some new modifications from sig. Giannetti, whose brother is now a lecturer in Pisa. I forgot to say that before getting married I had learned music thoroughly and how to play the harpsichord and double harp, so that when I sing I can improvise an accompaniment on these two instruments. And since they are very similar to each other,

the practical study of one made the other easier to play, and that helped me when composing music. Back to my frequent trips to Florence, I had conversations with men of letters and academics on their summer vacations from the University of Pisa; out of necessity, because of some disputes between members of my family, I had to apply myself to civil and canon law. I served as my own counsel, acquainting the judges with the situation on my own behalf; therefore I had to get some books on Roman law. In addition, there was the torture of having to study statutory law, found in the handwritten, unpublished statutes attributed to Paolo di Castro, alongside a long series of laws and edicts published in the “city of laws,” as Florence is called, and finally the legal statute of Livorno, commercial law, maritime law, and Jewish rites. Eventually I managed to acquire some peace thanks to my money and by knowing how to write up a deed or legal instrument with a more precise know-how than our inexperienced notaries. So, in Florence I visited the academies and became close friends with men of the best taste, enjoying their intimacy and confidence, which I maintained until their death. Lately, I recruited a brood of young and highly talented men as a way to make up for their loss, such as sig. dott. Cocchi, abbé Perelli, cavalier Venuti, etc.

After I learned French, I acquired most of the literary journals, histories, and memoirs of the Académie Royale, together with the methods of the various sciences as composed by the French. I am a bit more uncertain in English, and I own some books only to consult them as originals, because I do not trust the translations. In Arabic, Syriac, and Samaritan I can understand those passages that help me with Hebrew literature and penetrate the sentiments of Bochart and other eminent non-Jewish Hebraists. Although I have always disliked meddling with theological matters, and especially with polemics, I have been very upset by the impertinence of some people who immediately want to talk about religion: if you answer courteously, avoiding conflict, you are called apathetic (and on such an important matter!);

if you joke, you are an unbeliever; if you object, you are stubborn and obstinate. So I try to abstain from it whenever I can. Finally, just as the Duke of Modena was so kind as to summon me and listen to me for a whole night, during my trip to France, my royal lord amused himself several times in my company, quizzing me on languages and sciences, and he honored me with the title of “doctor.” Sig. *marchese* Rinuccini, secretary of state and war, imitates him when he writes to me [i.e., using the title “doctor”], and so do Senator President Ricci, moderator of the University of Pisa, and all the doctors of the said University. Hence I could no longer refuse [the title], as I had done until that moment with the crowd of knights, gentlemen, and men of letters that vied with each other to make me a doctor. Here I am, a doctor just like doctor Ricciardi, a Tuscan poet who, having been sent to teach moral philosophy at the said University, replied to Grand Duke Cosimo: “I am no doctor,” to which he retorted, “I am making you one.” And just last week my Nation bestowed on me the title of rabbi.

As for the name Filalete, there are two Joseph Attiases in Livorno and one in Amsterdam, so letters addressed to me used to go astray because of the ambiguity of the name. That is why I took the name “Filalete,” just as the historian Josephus was dubbed by scholars, because my friends teased me about my particularly strong love for truth. I was forgetting to say that the illustrious sig. dott. Redi of blessed memory, during the visits he made to Livorno with the most serene Cosimo, stayed with the botanist Cestoni, where they used to conduct experiments and hold conversations of the most refined taste over natural history.

I was born in 1672 and traveled around Italy, where I dwelled in the principal cities for many months, and in France, particularly in Paris, where I met the great men of our time. ...

## Appendix 2

This is the classification list as it appears in the catalogue of Joseph Attias' library, followed by the number of books in each section (item 1191 is missing). The original spelling is maintained.

- a) Scrittori, e Interpreti Sacri, Teologi, Critici Sacri, etc. In Foglio (1–20), 20
- b) Scrittori Sacri, Interpreti [*sic*], Teologi etc. In quarto (21–62), 42
- c) Teologi, Scrittori Sacri, Critici Sacri etc. In ottavo et infra (63–104), 42 (104 volumes)
- d) Filosofi Morali, Politici etc. In quarto (105–121), 17
- e) Filosofi Morali, Politici etc. in ottavo et infra (122–168), 47 (64 volumes)
- f) Legali in Foglio (169–247), 79
- g) Legali in quarto (248–271), 24
- h) Legali in ottavo et infra (272–283), 12 (115 volumes)
- i) Lessici, Grammatici etc. In foglio (284–323), 40
- j) Lessici, Grammatici. In quarto (324–373), 50
- k) Lessici, Grammatici etc. In ottavo et infra (374–441), 68 (158 volumes)
- l) Istorici, Cronologi etc. In foglio (442–475), 34
- m) Istorici, Cronologi etc. In quarto (476–527), 52
- n) Istorici, Cronologi etc. In ottavo et infra (528–595), 68 (154 volumes)
- o) Umanisti in Foglio (596–615), 20
- p) Umanisti in quarto (616–653), 38
- q) Umanisti in ottavo et infra (654–768), 115 (173 volumes)

- r) Filosofi, Geometri, Medici, Naturalisti, Arti etc. In foglio (769–819), 51
- s) Filosofi etc. In quarto (820–928), 109
- t) Filosofi etc. In ottavo et infra (929–1038), 110 (270 volumes)
- u) Geografi e Viaggiatori in foglio (1039–1072), 34
- v) Geografi e Viaggiatori in quarto (1073–1080), 8
- w) Geografi e viaggiatori in ottavo (1081–1117), 37 (79 volumes)
  
- x) Biblioteche, Giornali, Critici etc. In quarto (1118–1125), 8
- y) Biblioteche, Giornali, Critici etc. in ottavo et infra (1126–1181), 56 (64 volumes)
  
- z) Libri omessi. In foglio (1182–1183), 2
- aa) In quarto (1184–1208), 25 (27 volumes)
  
- bb) Inglese in Foglio (1–4), 4
- cc) Inglese in Quarto (1–8), 8
- dd) Inglese in Ottavo (1–28), 28 (40 volumes).

